



# University of Chester



**This work has been submitted to ChesterRep – the University of Chester's  
online research repository**

**<http://chesterrep.openrepository.com>**

Author(s): Noel Kirk

Title: A heuristic study into spirituality in the counselling relationship

Date: October 2011

Originally published as: University of Chester MA dissertation

Example citation: Kirk, N. (2011). *A heuristic study into spirituality in the counselling relationship*. (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Chester, United Kingdom.

Version of item: Submitted version

Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10034/297188>

**A Heuristic Study into  
Spirituality in the Counselling Relationship**

**Noel Kirk**

**Dissertation Submitted to the University of Chester**

**For the Degree of Master of Arts**

**(Clinical Counselling)**

**In part fulfilment of the Module Programme in**

**Clinical Counselling**

**October 2011**

## **Abstract**

Through a qualitative heuristic study (Moustakas (1990)), four counsellors who identified with their spirituality, were interviewed to explore spirituality within the therapeutic relationship. Through reflexive processes, the experience of the author remained visible within the research, integrating personal and professional experience with that of the research participants. The literature review suggests that psychotherapeutic change both affects, and is affected by spiritual concerns. Transcripts of semi-structured interviews produced the data needed for analysis. The data was analysed and interpreted using Moustakas' (1990) process. The research identifies three distinct themes, Connection, Transcendence/Mystical, and Definition. The growth of spiritual interest within the general population, and within psychotherapy, suggest that there is a need for counsellors to incorporate spirituality into the therapeutic relationship. Further research suggestions would be, to extend the theory and practice of psychotherapy by exploring the spiritual dimension of human development.

## **Declaration**

This work is original and has not been submitted previously in support of any other qualification or course.

Signed .....

Noel Kirk

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank Charles, Susan, David and Mary (these are pseudonyms for the research participants) for sharing with me their experiences. I know that it was a huge decision to let them-selves be known. I hope that my research does their stories justice.

Merryn Myatt whose help and support has been invaluable, when at times I wanted to give up, her patience and encouragement has kept me on track.

All the Tutors within the Counselling Department at the University of Chester, including my Supervisor Valda Swinton, their help and support, not only through my dissertation but throughout my MA, has enabled me to complete this part of my life's journey.

Last but not least my husband, Ian who has always been supportive of my research and my MA, and who for three years has given me space.

*This research is dedicated to*

*Alyesha Boothroyd who inspired me to follow my true path, was  
my mentor and best friend when she was alive, and who is ever  
present with me in spirit*

# CONTENTS

	Page Number
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
Aims and Objective	1
Rational and Significance	2
Research Method	2
Spirituality and My Life	4
Conclusion	5
<b>2. Literature Review</b>	<b>7</b>
Introduction	7
Search Strategies	7
Literature Search	8
Overview	8
Historical	10
Connection	11
Transcendence	13
Presence of Others	17
Triggers and Nature	18
Defining Religion and Spirituality	19
Conclusion	23
<b>3. Methodology</b>	<b>24</b>
Introduction	24
Qualitative Research	25
Heuristic Approach	27
Reflexivity	29
In-Dwelling	30
Data Collection	31
Data Analysis	33
Sample	35
Limitations	36
Validity and Trustworthiness	37
Ethics	39
<b>4. Outcomes</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>5. Discussion</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>6. Conclusion and Suggestions for Further Research</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>7. Epilogue</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>8. References</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>9. Appendices</b>	<b>80</b>

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Aims and Objective

Rational and Significance

Research Methods

Spirituality and My Life

Conclusion

*“Spirituality is our ability to make sense and meaning out of life, to discover one’s ultimate true nature and relationship to the universe”.*

*(O’Muchu, 1994, p. 169)*

Etherington (2004) indicates that it is generally accepted that the topics we choose to research often have some personal significance to the researcher, whether conscious or unconscious. I believe my research journey began long before it ever came into my awareness.

Moustakas (1990, p. 40) indicates that heuristic inquiry begins with the “internal search to discover.... a passionate desire to know... commitment to pursue a question that is strongly connected to one’s own identity and selfhood”. My own internal search is, to discover if there is space for spirituality within the therapeutic relationship.

### Aims and Objectives

The aim of my research is to search for answers to the above, and to explore spirituality in the counselling relationship. I will explore the meanings of spirituality and how, and if, these meanings relate and link to relational depth experiences



(Mearns & Cooper, 2005). Also in relation to practice and therapeutic outcome, I will explore if transcendental moments exist and if so, what effect they have on the level of depth reached in the therapeutic relationship.

### Rationale and Significance

The rationale behind my research study is my own fascination, and passion in endeavouring to understand spirituality, how people relate and connect with each other (Josselson, 1996), how we interact, how relationships build, how trust within a therapeutic relationship evolves, and the unique connection that creates a feeling of transcendence. Rogers (1980, p.129) describes this as:-

“When I am somehow in touch with the unknown in me... then whatever I do seems to be full of healing. .... At those moments it seems that my inner spirit has reached out and touched the spirit of the other. Our relationship transcends itself and becomes part of something larger”

It is also my own personal quest to understand the meaning of events in my own life, my practice, and my own connection to ‘all that is’.

To produce this creative synthesis (Moustakas, 1990) that is this research, I have drawn on many sources including, my own experiences of how spirituality has shaped my worldview, the experiences of my participants, literature and workshops.

### Research Method

In terms of methodology the question was how to actually research therapy and spirituality? West (2004, p. 115) also asks the question, “how to systematically explore therapy and spirituality whilst remaining true to the territory and to the human being involved”.

In deciding on a research method I drew upon Reeves' (2010) lecture where he indicated that the research method is chosen on its merits only, and not at the denigration of other approaches. In order for my research to be carried out effectively I decided to carry out a qualitative rather than quantitative approach. McLeod (1994, p.40) defines qualitative research as, "a process of systematic inquiry into the meanings which people employ to make sense of their experience and to guide their actions". Qualitative research adopts a more phenomenological position and focuses on the meaning events have for the person being studied (Patton, 1991). Since my research is to discover meaning, I believe qualitative research is a more appropriate method of research.

I was also influenced by Moustakas' (1990) heuristic inquiry, which involved the search for discovery, meaning and essence in significant human experience. Moustakas (1990, p. 40) indicates that all heuristic inquiry begins with the "internal search to discover.... a passionate desire to know... commitment to pursue a question that is strongly connected to one's own identity and selfhood".

In order to incorporate my own heuristic process, I looked to Etherington (2004) who points to the reflexive nature of qualitative research. This reflexivity is not just in the journey but in the writing up of the research itself. Reflexivity is my capacity, as the researcher, to acknowledge how my own experience and contexts inform the process and outcomes of my inquiry (Etherington, 2004). If I can be aware of how my own thoughts, feelings, culture, environment and social and personal history inform me as I interview my participants, transcribe their conversations and write up my findings, then perhaps I can come close to "the rigour that is required of good qualitative research" (Etherington, 2004, p.32).

Therefore through the heuristic process of Moustakas (1990) with its roots in a phenomenological paradigm, I offer a qualitative study, where the focus is on understanding the meaning of events to individuals (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).

### Spirituality and My Life

Spirituality has influenced my life in various forms. As a child I grew up in the Pentecostal Church where I struggled with Christianity and the Christian church. I was, and still am, critical of the Church of England and what it stands for. My own fascination with spiritual dimensions moved towards mysticism, Reiki (Quest, 2002) and the connection to a universal truth, which emphasised the significance of a more intangible awareness of my own spirituality. I have spent the past 20 years in a New Age spiritual context, not linked to any particular group but actively engaged in regular meditation and healing rituals (Clark, 1979; Walsh, 1989; Quest, 2002), and influenced by a number of different spiritual and religious beliefs.

I have always been aware of a certain 'presence' that exists when working with and relating to other individuals, not just in the therapeutic process but in my life in general. Rogers (1980), together with other writers, confirms my own personal 'inner experience'. Rogers (1990) points towards the psycho-spiritual with his concept of presence, suggesting that it is a fourth condition to add to, what he previously suggested were, the six necessary and sufficient conditions for therapeutic change to occur. (Rogers, 1957; Kirkschenbaum & Henderson, 1990). Thorne (1991, 2002) embraces the spiritual implications of presence, linking it into congruence. McLeod (1997) argues that just as psychotherapy was beginning to establish itself as a rational research-based discipline it finds that many of its most exciting developments are coming from innovations in therapeutic practice, and research that has drawn on

feminism, political activism, religion and spiritual practice. McLeod (1997, p. 23) concludes that “the postmodern impulse is to deconstruct therapy, to strip away its claim to privileged scientific knowledge/power/certainty and to reveal the core of therapy as an arena for telling personal stories”.

The writings of West (1997, 2004), Rogers (1980,) Buber (1958, 1970), Kirkschenbaum and Henderson (1990), Josselson (1996) and Thorne (1998, 2002, together with a discussion during a seminar at The University of Chester by Valda Swinton, have, amongst others, inspired me to reach beyond my own identification with spirituality, and search for a deeper understanding of spirituality within the therapeutic environment. Moustakas (1990) indicates that something ‘calls to us’ when we begin the research. For me this voice has been calling for a long time, and the research process has enabled me to search, discover and allow that voice to be heard.

### Conclusion

This research is not to find universal truth; it is hoped that it will help me, and others to discovery a deeper understanding of the role of spirituality within the therapeutic process (West, 2004; Ankrah, 2002; Clarkson, 1990), and feel empowered to embrace and integrate spirituality within counselling practice (West, 1994).

I acknowledge that my “passion...commitment and personal challenge” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 15) to understand myself and the world in which spirituality has a part to play, may influence the nature of the research process, as “findings can only be found by someone who is actively searching” (McLeod 2001, p. 141). With this in mind throughout the whole research process I have been committed to remaining as open as possible (Bond, 2000, 2004) and not to filter out any data, since all data has relevance to the research (McLeod, 2001). It is hoped by being constantly mindful of

Moustakas' (1990) inquiry method which requires initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication and creative synthesis, I have been able to provide themes and insights which reflect the experiences of those who participated in the research and enable a depth of understanding into this phenomenon.

My own 'yearning and searching' outlined in this introduction forms the basis of this research and explains my positioning as the researcher. Narayanasamy (2001, p. 10) indicates that "spiritual beliefs and practices permeate the life of a person, whether in health or illness". These spiritual beliefs and practices will be examined in greater detail in the review of the literature, which also examines spirituality and its relationship with psychology and counselling. The methodology chapter outlines the heuristic methodology used within this research. The data analysis and discussion draw together the themes of the interviews with participants. The conclusion weaves together the threads of the research with implications and further research suggestions.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

Introduction

Search Strategies

Literature Search

Overview

Historical

Connection

Transcendence

Presence of Others

Triggers and Nature

Defining Religion and Spirituality

Conclusions

#### Introduction

In order for me to create a meaningful literature review I have chosen to undertake a thematic review. This strategy involves the identification of distinct issues or questions that run through my research. McLeod (2003) indicates that a thematic literature review enables the writer to create meaningful groupings of papers in different aspects of the topic.

#### Search Strategies

The literature review focuses on books and journal articles which I had in my possession. For my extended search, I utilised the electronic data bases provided by the University of Chester, and via the internet. The following terms were input into

the electronic data bases: spirituality/counselling; counselling/spirituality; therapy/spirituality; spirituality/therapy; impact of spirituality on therapists. I also searched the paper journals at the University, and those of several colleagues, and attended workshops run by Dr. William West and Dr. Peter Gubi.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) indicate that, researchers should not read too much literature before approaching data gathering so that they are not biased in their understanding by previous knowledge. In contrast, West (2011) argues that there are few researchers who will approach research without some prior knowledge, as many researchers research topics they are passionate about. My own challenge was to find a way to research that drew on my previous understanding but allowed me to be open to surprises by what is new in the data. Since my research process has been informed by Moustakas' (1990) heuristic inquiry method, and in the spirit of qualitative research, the major part of the literature was reviewed, analysed and incorporated as the study progressed (Punch, 2000).

### Literature Search

The initial part of the review presents a short overview of spirituality and counselling. A comprehensive account is beyond the scope of this review, but it is intended to provide the particular context for my research. The main section of the review then examines the literature on spiritual awareness in the therapeutic relationship.

### Overview

McLeod (1998) and West (2000, 2004, 2011) indicate that despite counselling and psychotherapy being largely secularised, they have their roots in religion. Pastoral counselling in Britain played an important role in the establishment of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) as the professional body for

counselling (West, 1998a). Both Halmos (1965) and McLeod (1998) have commented on, how the decline in the number of clergy and pastoral care workers has matched the increase in counsellors. Walsh (1996, p. 2) argues:

“That most people who come for therapeutic help today are seeking more than symptom reduction... they yearn for greater meaning and deeper connections with others in their lives. Many are in spiritual distress at the core of physical, emotional, and relational problems”.

Following some pioneers in transpersonal psychology (Maslow 1971; Buber, 1958, 1970), there has been a growth in the literature and research during the last couple of decades around spirituality, and its relation to and position within counselling (Grof and Grof, 1989; Thorne, 1991, 1998, 2002; West 1998a, 2000a, 2002a, 2004a; Wilber 1983; Swinton, 2001; Ankrah 2002; Richards & Bergin, 1997, 2005). Bartoli (2007) indicates that since the 1950s there have been changes in the way psychotherapy views religious and spiritual beliefs, namely from the humanistic-existential perspective, regarding them now as aspects of human development (McLennan, N., Rochow, S., & Arthur, N., 2002).

However even though current research indicates that psychotherapeutic change both affects and is affected by spiritual concerns (Thorne, 1991, 1998, 2002; West 2004), West (2004) argues that relatively little is known about the degree to which spirituality is used as an intervention in counselling, and how it is perceived by counsellors. Thorne (quoted in Gubi, 2008, p. 9) indicates that:

“For a profession which produces an ever more abundant supply of literature, it is perhaps surprising that certain aspects of what happens behind closed doors of the therapeutic encounter have remained comparatively unexplored.”



## Historical

Modern therapy could be said to have begun with Freud. West (2004) indicates that Freud had an ambivalent attitude towards spirituality and spiritual experiences, and had an even more negative attitude towards religion. Jones (1964) indicates that Freud had grown up devoid of any belief in a God or immortality, and never felt the need for it. Freud (1963) linked humankind's need for religion to early childhood experiences, and he saw religion as providing people with a "false explanation for the uncertainties of life, it gave them a benevolent God, a father figure who could be appealed to in prayer" (West 2000, p.15). Freud's (1963) view was that psychoanalysis was a science and he was especially dismissive of those philosophers, who fought to preserve religion (West, 2000). Hayes and Cowie (2005) indicate that this left many psychodynamic practitioners in a defensive position in relation to religious experiences.

Freud (1963, p. 2) whilst not denying people's claims to have had spiritual experiences, stated "I cannot discover this 'oceanic' feeling in myself" and, regarded these oceanic feelings as 'strange', suggesting that they "fit in so badly with the fabric of our psychology". There are many writers however from the psychoanalytic and psychodynamic traditions who are positive about the spiritual parts of our lives, for example Frankl, (1947, 1973,1978); Herman (1987); Jung, (1933).

Whilst Freud (1963) saw religion as a regression to an earlier stage of ego development, Jung (1931) saw religion as an expression of aspects of consciousness that have been changed by an experience. Fontana (2003, p. 96) indicates that Jung saw religion as "an essential aspect of human nature", and that "we are born with the potential to experience the numinosum" (an invisible quality or presence which Jung thought of as unconscious archetypal material). Grof (1972) in

agreement with Jung refers to the concept of 'numinous' indicating that 'numinosity' is about direct apprehension of the sacred and non material world. Grof (1972) like many other theorist, implies that spiritual motivation is intrinsic to human beings although this may be lying dormant in the individual.

Jung, (1933) recognised the spiritual and religious needs of his patients and saw this as potentially healthy:

“Among all my patients, in the second half of life there has not been none whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life. It is safe to say that everyone of them fell ill because he had lost that which the living religions of every age have given its followers, and none of them have been really healed who did not regain his religious outlook” ( p. 234).

West (2004, p. 17) argues that if we were to take Jung's views seriously they would “transform our modern psychotherapeutic practices, putting the spirituality of our clients at the heart of the therapeutic encounter”. Jung was also aware of the religious traditions of the East and studied texts from Buddhism and Taoism. He also studied yoga and meditation (Jung, 1969). West (2000) indicates that Jung had a huge impact on therapeutic approaches which honoured the spiritual, especially transpersonal therapy.

### Connection

In contrast Rogers (1980), brought a more humanistic and existential focus into Western psychology (Miovic, 2004). Towards the end of Rogers' life he identified a new spiritual dimension that he had observed in his work with clients and groups which he refers to as 'presence':-

“When I am closer to my inner, intuitive self, when I am somehow in touch with the unknown in me, when perhaps I am in a slightly altered state of consciousness in the relationship, then whatever I do seems to be full of

healing. Then simply my presence is releasing and helpful” (Kirschenbaum & Henderson, 1990, p. 137).

Thorne (1991) continuing this development embraces the spiritual implication of presence and introduced the quality of 'tenderness'. Thorne (1991, p.77) indicates “when tenderness is present in a relationship I believe that there is the possibility of finding wholeness”. Thorne goes on to say “I feel in touch with myself to the extent that it is not an effort to think or to know what I am feeling. It is as if energy is flowing through me and I am simply allowing it free passage”. Thorne (1991, p. 213) develops the theme by indicating “I am convinced that where love, acceptance, cherishing, understanding and compassion are present, then God is in the midst and grace is available”. Thorne (2001, p. 438) views spirituality as the “yearning within the human being for meaning, for that which is greater than the encapsulated individual, for interconnection with all that is”. Thorne (2001, p. 438) saw religion “as a body of ideas, perceptions and experiences that are believed to serve the yearning inherent in spirituality”. Thorne (1991, p. 127) is bold enough to state that “the future of the person centred approach may well depend on its capacity to embrace the world of spiritual reality”

However, there is still a source of controversy in the person centred world especially surrounding 'presence' (McLeod, 1993; Van Belle, 1990). Van Belle (1990, p. 54) argued that Rogers had become “preoccupied with a mystical, spiritual world full of psychic phenomena” Mearns (1994) suggests that presence can be referred to without using spiritual language, and can be understood within existing concepts like a merging of the core conditions together with a counsellors ability to be still inside. However, there have been an increasing number of humanistic therapists who

appear to move towards a more mystical and spiritual view of life as they get older namely, Heron (1992); Rowan (1983, 1993); Chaplin (1989) and Edwards, (1992).

Buber (1970) had a huge impact on both the therapy world and therapists themselves especially those of a humanistic or an existentialist inclination. Buber (1970) writes about spirituality in everyday human relating indicating that the I-Thou relationship was essentially spiritual and “God was to be experienced in the in between, the connectedness of the two people” (West, 2004, p 58). Therapists, including Rogers (1980) and Clarkson (1990), maintain that they experience something similar to the I-Thou relationship with clients. However, Buber was sceptical about this and in what has been referred to as a ‘unique’ dialogue between Rogers and Buber in 1957, Buber took Rogers to task. Buber felt the I-Thou relationship could not be truly realised in the therapeutic process because of the “power inherent within the therapy relationship” (West, 2000, p. 30). However, Rogers insisted that the therapeutic relationship is “a meeting of two persons on an equal basis” (West 2000, p. 30).

Schwartz (2002) argues that human connectivity is arguably underpinned by aeons of history and infinite memory in the form of quantum mechanics. West ( 2001) indicates that interconnectedness is a reality at all levels on human existence. West (2001, p. 124) asks the question “how can we not affect the client who sits before us...ideally we are ‘becoming’ together and can meet the world in connection”.

### Transcendence

Transpersonal psychology can be seen as an offshoot of humanistic psychology. Hendricks and Weinhold, (1982, p. 8) indicate that transpersonal approaches “see humans as intuitive, mystical, psychic and spiritual”. Guest (1989) indicates that Jung was the first person to use the word ‘transpersonal’ with reference to the

collective unconscious. Transpersonal psychology draws on elements from psychosynthesis, developed by Assagioli (1965) as a method of enhancing all aspects of the person, by using ideas and techniques such as meditation, chakras, dream-work, imagery, healing, Sufism, Buddhism, astrology and after death experiences (Boorstien, 1986) to enable a person to realise their true spiritual nature.

Grof's (1972, p. 48-49) definition of transpersonal experiences is "an experience involving an expansion or extension of consciousness beyond the usual ego boundaries and limitations of time and space". Vaughan (1986) suggests that transpersonal experiences are concerned "with experiences and aspirations that lead people to seek transcendence, as well as the healing potential of self-transcendence". Grof & Grof (1989, p. 48) define the word transpersonal as "transcending the usual way of perceiving and interpreting the world". Clarkson (1995, p. 7) includes the transpersonal as a modality in her examination of the therapeutic relationship; however, clients are more likely to use the words 'spiritual' and 'religious' than 'transpersonal' when describing their personal experience.

Wilber (1979b, 1980) suggests that beyond the stage of body-mind integration, which he regards as the highest development reached by secular Western therapy, the spiritual realm can be experienced. Transpersonal techniques can be found in many complementary medicines and in New Age Spirituality (Quest, 2008).

A study carried out by Elkins, Henderson, Hughes, Leaf and Sanders (1988) found that people experience spirituality as an altered state or transcendent dimension and that a way of being and experiencing is crucial. Elkins, et al's (1988) work was based on four major assumptions: that there exists a spiritual dimension; that spirituality is a human phenomenon and potentially exists in all people; that

spirituality is not the same as religion; and that spirituality can be defined, described and assessed. However, at the end of their study Elkins et al (1988, 0. 16-17) write:

“In our day the traditional religion has failed to meet the spiritual needs of many people. In their quest for a life of depth and meaning it seems there is a growing number who are pursuing alternative spiritual paths and nurturing their spirituality in ways they are discovering for themselves. The spiritual development of these people deserves to be treated with respect and sensitivity by those studying spirituality “.

Richards & Bergin (1997) indicate that because of the growth in spiritual interest within the general population, there is a need for counsellors to challenge the historical alienation between religious and psychotherapy and increase their awareness of religious and spiritual issues. They argue that the more successful outcomes are achieved when spiritual issues are worked with sensitively and competently within counselling. A study carried out by West (1998a) indicated that three quarters of the Quaker therapists interviewed felt that their spiritual faith gave them something extra when they worked.

Rogers (1980, p. 133), with increasing conviction, indicated that there is what he called a ‘formative tendency’ at work in the cosmos, which can be observed at every level. He indicated that:

“There is a formative directional tendency in the universe, which can be traced and observed in Stella space, in crystals, in micro-organisms, in organic life, in human beings... In human kind it extends from a single cell... to transcendent awareness of the unity of the cosmic system including man”.

Research has highlighted that although religious observance appears to be declining, many people are pursuing their sense of spiritual outside organised religion (Gubi, 2008; West 2004, 2011; Swinton 2001). Swinton (2001, p.7) indicates that within Western cultures “there has been a significant rise in interest in spirituality”. Hay &

Morisy (1978) in their study into ecstatic, paranormal or religious experiences in the UK and USA discovered that three quarters of their sample said that the spiritual side of life was important. However Hay (1982) found that people indicated that they were reluctant to disclose such experiences, consequently therefore it has only relatively recently become apparent how common such experiences are.

Further research by Hay and Heald (1987), summarized in appendix I, shows that a large percentage of the people sampled in the UK confess to having mystical experiences which come under the heading of religious. Hay and Heald (1987) indicate that if they included forms of religious experience that does not appear in the table, like Wordsworth's nature mysticism, some religious communities ecstatic experiences (Christie-Murray, 1978), and visions of angels and saints (McClure, 1983) the overall percentage would increase. These findings provide support for the argument that religious experiences involve more than just fantasy-driven altered states of consciousness.

In a more recent survey carried out by Hay & Hunt (2000), Hay indicates that a cumulative total of 76 per cent of his British participants experiencing religious or spiritual experiences (see appendix II). In this study people indicated that this was the first time they had ever discussed such experiences since they feared being considered mad. From this study Hay concluded that from 1987 to 2000 people are now more willing to disclose their experiences. Hunt (2000) indicates that such experiences seem to be universal, and link into good health. In comparing Hay & Hunts (2000) study with Elkins et al's (1988) study, there appears to be a connection that points to a shift away from materialism towards altruism that occurs for people having spiritual experiences. These findings were similar to Bergin and Jansen (1990) and Allman, De La Rocha, Elkins & Weathers (1992) quantitative studies of the religious views of, and attitudes to, mystical experiences of US therapists.

### *Presence of Another*

Johnson (1971) indicates that transcendent mystical experiences include the presence of other beings. Abbess St. Theresa of Avila wrote of seeing her deceased parents during one of her mystical episodes (St. Theresa of Avila, 1960). Rogers (1980) in describing his own experiences of observing a 'contact' with his wife Helen's deceased sister, and the 'contact' with Helen after her death, indicated that all these experiences made him more open to the possibility of the continuation of the individual human spirit, and identity beyond death. Cox (1983) and McClure (1983) give examples of the writings of Christian mystics who feel they have experiences the presence of the Virgin Mary, and accounts of experiences of Christ.

Jantzen (2000) writes eloquently of the fourteenth century anchoress Julian of Norwich who has captured the imagination of our time. This extraordinary woman mystic shares with her readers the deepest and most intimate experiences of her life through her writings, which are reflections on the visions that appeared to her during a severe illness. In one account Julian of Norwich indicates that 'our lord showed himself, in glory' and 'he said again it is I, it is I', Jantzen( 2000) argues that this is a clear reference to Julian experiencing the presence of God. Julian's insights into spiritual growth and wholeness foreshadow the modern interest in psychotherapy. Thorne (1991; 1998) suggests that she could be considered the patron saint of counselling, as she exercised her vocation, as she counselled through the window of her anchoress's cell.

Hardy (1979) indicates that for many, the sense of relating in spirituality is characterised by a felt sense of 'something other' that has been described as a deity with whom one can have a personalised 'I-Thou' relationship. Gubi (2002) indicates that the 'transcendent other' has many ways of being understood and related to;



God, Higher Self, Inner Light, Cosmos; sense of inner love, wisdom, compassion and connectedness with 'all that is' and with the creative energies that run through it. Thorne (2002) discusses his own capacity to enter into the therapeutic relationship where spirit touches spirit and where 'something larger' is experienced.

### *Triggers & Nature*

Hardy's (1979) study indicates that various events have triggered mystical experiences, the most frequent being depression and despair. Hardy (1979) indicates that despair, suffering, loss and or hopelessness seem to help create the particular state of mind that leads to religious experiences, and to the transforming effect of this experience. The second trigger reported by Hardy (1979) was prayer and or meditation. Stilling and focusing the mind by meditation has traditionally been regarded by all traditions as a way of opening the awareness to spiritual dimensions. The third trigger in Hardy's (1979) study was natural beauty. This is clearly indicated in the Poets with a particular feeling for nature such as Blake, Tennyson, Wordsworth, Emerson, Hopkins and Yeats who all write of finding through nature, a contact with either the divinity or transcendental mysticism. Walsh (1999) discusses the importance of nature for mystical experiences and includes Shamans and Native Americans who both report that nature sensitizes us to the spiritual. The fourth trigger in Hardy's (1979) study of mystical experiences was belonging to, and participation in, religious worship. Other triggers mentioned by Hardy, (1979) include sacred places, music, visual art, literature, drama and film, and the prospect of death. Zaechner, (1971) suggest that in all these 'experiences', the person who has the experience seems to be convinced, that what he experiences is something far more

real than what he experiences normally through his five senses or thinks with his mind.

### *Defining Religion and Spirituality*

Religion and spirituality offer a number of sets of words and frames within which to make sense of our spiritual lives (West, 2000). Barnum (1998) indicates, that spirituality has many meanings and interpretations that are difficult to encapsulate in a common definition. Spirituality is said to be “undoubtedly one of the most misunderstood words in the English language” (Sperry & Shafranske, 2005, p. 3) The Compact Oxford English Dictionary defines the word spirit as

1. “Relating to or affecting the human spirit as opposed to material or physical things”.
2. “Relating to religion or religious belief”.

In contrast religion is defined as:

1. “The belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods”.
2. “A particular system of faith and worship”.

Gubi (2008) indicates that the difficulty with definitions is that they have to be communicated through language, however spirituality cannot be fully understood in words, as spirituality has to be a ‘lived experience’

Swinton (2001, p. 28) defines religion as a “formal system of beliefs, usually centring on some conception of God and expressing the views of a particular religious group or community”. Argyle and Beit-Hallahmi (1975) define religion as a system of beliefs

in divine or superhuman power, and practices of worship or other rituals directed towards such a power.

Heelas & Woodhead, (2005) associate the term 'religion' with the established order of things, with scriptures, dogmas, rituals and so on, and spirituality with those new forms which connect primarily with subject experience. In the Kendal Project amongst the groups and activities that Heelas & Woodhead (2005) surveyed were aromatherapy, astrology, circle dancing, cranio-sacral therapy, energy management, healing, kinaesiology, massage, meridian therapy, paganism and reiki, to name but a few. Each of these may be defined as 'spiritual' which points to a central problem in addressing this area of human experiencing. This blurred and uncertain mix of mysticism and lifestyles makes it more difficult to talk with common understanding about what spirituality is in any definitive way (West, 2004, 2011).

The word 'spirituality' is given a range of meanings within therapy and therapy related literature, varying from all forms of self-awareness (Farrow, 1984) to all states of awareness which possess values higher than average (Assogioli, 1986). A number of writers and researchers have explored what is meant by spirituality and spiritual or mystical experiences (Allman et al., 1992; Assogioli, 1986; Farrow, 1984; Hardy, 1979; Maslow, 1970; Wilber 1983). Swinton, (2001, p. 20) suggests that "spirituality is the outward expression of the inner workings of the human spirit". A study carried out by Shafranske and Malony (1990, p.74) concluded that over half of their respondents regarded their spirituality as an "alternative spiritual path which is not part of organized religion".

Spirituality has been described as the essence of life (Quest, 2002). Fukuyama & Sevig, (1999, p. 4-5) suggest that this essence of life of life "infuses human beings with qualities such as inspiration, creativity and connection with others". Thorne

(2001, p. 438) defines spirituality as “the yearning within the human being for meaning for that which is greater than the encapsulated individual, for interconnection with all that is. It is an expression of the whole person, physical, emotional and intellectual.”

Swinton (2001) indicates that while the terms ‘spirit’ and ‘spirituality’ are closely connected, they are not synonymous. The human spirit is the essential life-force that undergirds, motivates and vitalizes human existence. Spirituality is the specific way in which individuals and communities respond to experience of spirit. Rankin (2005, p.15) sees spirituality as a “personal lived reality” of which one is aware and not just a collection of repetitive rituals. It is about reflexive practice that is pursued and integrated into experience. Robinson (2003) proposes that spirituality is about the search for meaning, perspective, understanding and value. This search may only begin when we are faced with adversity that challenges our belief system (Robinson, Kendrick & Brown, 2003).

Elkins et. al. (1988, p. 10) from a transcendent dimension defines spirituality as:

“A way of being and experiencing that come about through awareness of a transcendent dimension and that is characterised by certain identifiable values in regard to self, others, nature, life and whatever one considers to be the Ultimate”

Zaehner, (1971) in agreement with Elkins et. al. (1988) indicates that a widely authenticated fact of the central mystical experience is this sense of unity, a sense of nature in all things or all things being one. Zaehner, (1971) adds that the experience, at its highest appears to transcend time and space, and constitutes an infinite mode of existence.

Bailey (1999) notes that, a significant change in public attitude towards 'spirituality' occurred in British culture in the 1970s. Bailey (1999, p. 1) observes that terms such as 'pastoral', 'myth' and 'spiritual' became 'no longer seen as purely religious' and began to be appropriated into secular society to the extent that today the 'spiritual' aim of education is now monitored in school. Swinton (2001) in his exploration of mental health problems indicates, that 'spiritual needs' of patients are now considered in the provision of health care. This shift of spirituality from being seen in terms of the secular rather than religious raises many difficult questions for organized religion (Bailey, 1999). West (2004) suggests that this shift can also leave individuals in confusion as to where and with whom spiritual issues should be raised. Thorne (1991, 1998, 2002) argues that in this secularisation of counselling and psychotherapy something has been lost and, that clients' spiritual needs are not always being effectively addressed within the talking therapies. Swinton (2001) stresses, that if mental health practitioners, which includes counsellors, are to develop a therapeutic understanding of spirituality, it is necessary to learn to be comfortable with uncertainty and mystery.

King-Spooner and Newness (2001) argues that our everyday experience is saturated by spirituality if we could only open ourselves up to it. O'Murchu (1994, p. 169-170) defines spirituality as "the human search for meaning and fulfilment in life. It is our ability to make sense and meaning out of life, to discover one's ultimate true nature and relationship to the universe". Shafranske and Gorsuch (1984) define spirituality as the courage to look inside one's self, and as trust and openness to the infinite. Swinton (2001, p. 13) indicates that in order for us to understand spirituality "it will be necessary to let go of our positivistic desire for absolute certainty, neat definitions and universally applicable categories"

## Conclusion

The review of the literature has explored the different ways in which spirituality has been viewed and acknowledged within counselling. The different ways in which spirituality has been defined from being synonymous with religion and a way that gives meaning and purpose in life, through to the transcendent dimension of spirituality. It has also discussed the importance of the relationship spirituality has to and, the position it holds within counselling (Thorne, 1994, 2002, West, 2001b, 2002a, 2004; Rogers, 1980).

Swinton (2001, p. 12) indicates that:

“A view of spirituality that does not look beyond institutional religion risks missing out on some of the very significant spiritual needs that are experienced by people with no formal religious interest on a daily basis”.

The growth of spiritual interest within the general population suggests that there is a need for counsellors to incorporate spirituality into the counselling relationship (Richards & Bergin, 1997). Thorne's (1991, p. 127) bold statement indicates that “the future of the person centred approach may well depend on its capacity to embrace the world of spiritual reality”. The next chapter will explore the method and methodology of the research process.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

### **Philosophy and Design**

Introduction

Qualitative Research

Heuristic Approach

Reflexivity

In Dwelling

Data Collection

Data Analysis

Sample

Limitation

Validity and Trustworthiness

Ethics

*“Spirituality relates to such things as love, meaning, purpose things which cannot be fully captured by the traditional methodologies of science”.*

*(Swinton, 2001, p. 93)*

### **Introduction**

West (2011, p. 195) indicates that “research is about doing, and therapy research should make some contribution to better therapeutic practice”. From the start of my research I wanted to be able to portray the essential qualities and meaning of the experience of the research participants, and to systematically explore therapy and spirituality in a way that would both inform my own and others’ practice. My dilemma

was how to actually research therapy and spirituality. I needed to find ways of working that fit with who I am, my underlying values, my philosophies on life, my views of reality, and my own beliefs.

Traditional research methods have accountability, respectability and scientific viability, and include evaluation and statistical information (Etherington, 2004). Traditional research has also relied on the separation of the researcher from that or those being researched and attempts are made to minimise the impact of the researcher on those being researched (West, 2004).

However, being in postmodern times in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with new research paradigms, it is argued that there is a place for more democratic models of research that help us to understand human experience and relationships in depth (Etherington, 2004; West, 1998a, 2001b, 2002a, 2004, 2011; Mearns & Thorne, 2000; Gubi, 2004, 2008 and Moustakas, 1990).

In engaging with the literature and asking the question “what methodology will enable me to systematically explore my research topic” and “what role do I want to play as researcher within this methodology?” (West, 2011), it was clear that there was a strong argument for a qualitative approach to researching my topic. However, I do acknowledge that there have been valuable quantitative studies done, for example by David Hay (Hay & Morisy, 1978, Hay, 1982).

### Qualitative Research

Quantitative research is based on a philosophical position that “knowledge is unitary and therefore attainable through a standardised set of specific procedures” (McLeod, 1994, p.71). Elliott (1995) argues that qualitative research is concerned with meaning, and arises from a philosophical stance that, “human knowledge is



contextualised and local” (McLeod, 1994, p. 71). McLeod (2001) suggests that qualitative research has often been defined in terms of what it is not, for example research that does not involve statistical techniques or other means of quantification. Miles and Huberman (1994) describe qualitative data as words rather than numbers. Within qualitative research the perspective of the researcher is to be acutely tuned into the “experience and meaning system of others – to indwell – and at the same time to be aware of how one’s own biases and preconceptions may be influencing what one is trying to understand” (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p. 123).

McLeod, 1994 (p. 78) further defines qualitative research as “a process of systematic inquiry into the meaning which people employ to make sense of their experience and to guide their actions” In qualitative research, the researcher attempts to develop an understanding of the phenomena under study, based as much as possible on the perspective of those being studied (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Since qualitative research adopts a more phenomenological position, and focuses on the meaning events have for the person being studied (Patton, 1991), I felt that this methodology was more in tune with the purpose of my research.

The role I was to play as researcher was also an important consideration at the start of my journey. Moustakas (1990, p. 13) indicates that “the journey begins with something that calls us from within” and “the internal search to discover....a commitment to pursue a question that is strongly connected to one’s own identity and selfhood” (p.175). The method I chose was about seeking to resourcefully weave together tools, and methods that might be necessary in order to achieve an insightful, and comprehensive understanding of the topic being investigated (West, 2004; 2011).

Differing qualitative methodologies are based on differing worldviews and what is considered to be appropriate and valuable data, and data analysis (West, 2004; Patton, 1991, McLeod, 1994). McLeod (2001) argues that all qualitative methodologies are either phenomenological or hermeneutic or a mixture of both.

Phenomenology is one of the underlying philosophical traditions that underpin qualitative research (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; McLeod, 2003). As a research approach, it aims to achieve a comprehensive and authentic description of a way a phenomenon is experienced by an individual (McLeod, 2003). The task of the researcher is to be immersed in the material until a sense of the essence of the phenomenon being investigated becomes clear (Moustakas, 1990). The researcher does as much as possible to bracket off or put aside personal experiences in order to understand those of the informants (McLeod, 2003).

Since my intended role of researcher was to be an integral part of the research, and to be able to disclose, within appropriate limits, my perspective of the phenomenon being studied (Mintz, 2010), I needed a phenomenological viewpoint that was respectful of how I and other people experience life. Phenomenologically speaking we can never know reality directly, all we know is our perception of reality (West, 2004).

### Heuristic Approach

The qualitative heuristic methodology of Moustakas (1990) feels more in keeping with the focus of my research, to my own world-view and the person-centred philosophy that underpins my counselling practice. Moustakas originally argued that heuristics was different to phenomenology “Phenomenology ends with the essence of experience: Heuristics retains the essence of the person in experience” (Douglas and

Moustakas, 1985, p. 43). Moustakas (1994) later came to regard heuristics as a branch of phenomenology.

Heuristic methodology derived from phenomenology, and is a process which enables the researcher by inclusion to make a personal connection, relationship and exploration of a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1990). As with other forms of qualitative research it involves the “search for discovery of meaning and essence in significant human experience” (Douglas & Moustakas, 1985, p. 40). Moustakas (1990, p.40) goes on to add that heuristic inquiry is an “intentional readiness and determination to discover a fundamental truth regarding the meaning and essence of one’s own experience and that of others”.

Moustakas (1990, 1994) indicates that heuristic inquiry requires a personal connection with the topic of inquiry which inevitably leads to “self examination, significant personal learning and change” (Stiles, 1993, p. 604). Walsh (1996, p. 38) states: “Unlike practitioners of quantitative methods, we can learn as much about ourselves when conducting research as we can about the persons with whom we collaborate”.

Heuristic research is an autobiographic process, comes from an inner passion for the subject and the power of heuristic inquiry lies in its potential for disclosing truth (West, 2004, Moustakas, 1990). Through personal challenges involving exhaustive inner self dialogue, self-discovery, a devotion and commitment to “pursue a question that is strongly connected to one’s own identity and selfhood alongside the world in which one lives a comprehensive knowledge is generated” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 40). Such a view indicates that it is through our very humanness that we can understand another human (Moustakas, 1990).

Heuristic research has echoes of Carl Rogers who said “the very feeling which has seemed to me most private, most personal, and hence most incomprehensible by others, has turned out to be an expression for which there is a resonance in many other people” (Kirchenbaum and Henderson, 1990a, p. 27).

### Reflexivity

As a researcher integrating personal experience and reflecting openly upon my own process, experience and connectedness with this research topic, I am part of the research. This is consistent with reflexive ethnographies and calls for research reflexivity: an awareness of the contribution the researcher makes to the way meaning is constructed throughout the process (Etherington, 2004). West (2004) argues that the involvement of the researcher in the process can facilitate trust, and deeper levels of sharing of understanding of the phenomenon. However, West (2004, p. 127) goes on to indicate that “there is a danger of collusion and of missing the obvious in such research but it provides access to material that an outsider would take a longer time and maybe never reach”.

Heuristic research requires a subjective process of reflecting, exploring, shifting and elucidating the nature of the phenomenon under investigation. Its ultimate purpose is to “cast light on a focused problem, question or theme” (Douglas and Moustakas, 1985, p.40). It requires total immersion by the researcher to the point where a creative incubation enables and brings a new understanding or experience of the phenomenon. Moustakas (1990) indicates that there are six phases to heuristic research: initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication and creative synthesis (see appendix III). However, although heuristic research does move through these phases, it is not necessarily a linear process and does not

constitute a rigid framework (Moustakas, 1990). These stages enable the researcher to both locate themselves within and guide the research (Etherington, 2004).

### In-dwelling

In heuristic methodology the researcher seeks to find “qualitative depictions that are at the heart and depth of a person’s experience” (Moustakas, 1990. P. 38). It encourages the personal experience of the researcher, and the heuristic process of indwelling which enables the researcher to seek a deeper meaning of a theme of human experience. It involves a “willingness to gaze with unwavering attention and concentration into some fact of human experience in order to understand its constituent equalities and its wholeness.” (Moustakas, 1990, p.24).

Polanyi (1983) suggests that underlying all concepts in heuristic research and discovery is the power of revelation in tacit knowing, “as a way to know more than we can tell” by not looking at things in detail but by dwelling in them so that we can understand the joint meaning of the object or phenomenon of study. In applying this process to heuristic research, the researcher is required to look beyond the details and become aware of the whole (Polanyi, 1962). As Douglas and Moustakas (1985, p 50) put it: ‘to know, without awareness of how or why one knows, is the sine qua non of tacit knowing’.

Essentially in the heuristic process, a story is created that portrays the qualities, meaning and essence of universally unique experiences (Moustakas, 1990). I feel that the methodology I have chosen to carry out my research provides the opportunity for participants to tell their story, and for me to hear the participants’ own words. When we use our own stories or those of others, for research, we give testimony to what we have witnessed; and “that testimony creates a voice” (Etherington 2000, p.17). Moustakas (1990, p.38) indicates that in heuristic

methodology the researcher seeks to find “qualitative depictions that are at the heart and depths of a person's experiences”.

The programme of research by West (1997, 1998a, 2001b, 2007) into the relationship between therapy and spiritual experiences reflects the application of a disciplined heuristic approach. Throughout the whole of my research I wanted to portray the essential qualities, and meaning of the experience of the research participants, by offering each participant the opportunity to describe their experiences. I hope this methodology allowed data to emerge and be discovered rather than proven.

### Data Collection

Mearns and McLeod (1984) have suggested that the principles of person-centred counselling can offer an effective basis for qualitative data gathering. If the interviewer can aim to establish a relationship with the interviewee characterised by high levels of respect, empathy, congruence, and acceptance, then the informant will be more likely to engage with the research in an authentic and constructive manner (McLeod, 2003).

The data of qualitative research is usually people's words and actions, and requires a method that allows the researcher to capture language and behaviour (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). A way of gathering data in heuristic investigation is through extended interviews that often take the form of dialogues with oneself and research participants. With this in mind I decided carry out individual face to face interviews to gather the main body of data. I felt this would achieve a more profound form of data collection, and seemed more appropriate for the focus of my research.

Interviewing is a very widely used qualitative data-collection technique (McLeod, 2003), and is a flexible way of gathering research data that is detailed and personal. One of the disadvantages of interviews is the amount of time that can be spent in setting them up, conducting the session, and then transcribing the tape recording (McLeod, 2003). The quality of information obtained can also depend on the level of “rapport and trust between the interviewer and interviewee” (McLeod, 2003, p. 74)

There are different approaches to the structuring of qualitative research interviews (Lofland, 1971) which include, open-ended interviews, unstructured interviews, semi-structured interview and structured interviews. As I felt able to anticipate in advance the areas into which I intended to inquire, I decided to use a semi-structured interview approach. This involved creating a list of potential questions, working out how to ask these questions most effectively in terms of order of topics, then finally carrying out a pilot interview to test the process and procedures. Examples of the use of semi-structured interviewing can be seen in the research carried out by Maluccio (1979) and Skovhold and Ronnestad (1992).

My research participants were found by word of mouth. I discovered that once I started to discuss my research topic, participants came forward on a voluntary basis. I eliminated those I knew personally in order to satisfy ethical requirements regarding dual relationships.

The interview process was sent out to all participants which included an information sheet (appendix IV), and the interview themes (appendix V). The information included the process of the interview, how information would be used and issues of confidentiality. Appendix VI is the interview themes with my prompts in italics, which participants did not have sight of.

Throughout the whole process of data collection, I was mindful that in heuristic interviewing, the data generated is dependent upon accurate, empathic listening; being open to myself and to the participants, and “being skilful in creating a climate that encouraged the participants to respond comfortably, accurately, comprehensively and honestly” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 48).

Each interview lasted 40 minutes to an hour. Whilst the interview needed to have a basic structure to enable information to be useful for the research, I was mindful that the participant was the most important part of the process. Even though I had interview questions, if a participant had moved into other areas, (as did happen) I acknowledged that this was part of the interview process.

After the interviews were completed I personally transcribed the data. For me this was an important part of the heuristic process which enabled me to become completely connected and immersed in the data (Moustakas, 1990). Once the data had been transcribed I sent a copy to each participant in order for them to review the transcript, verify the accuracy, and make any changes necessary.

### Data Analysis

McLeod (2003) argues that analysis and interpretation of qualitative data present considerable challenges to researchers. Moustakas (1990, p. 174) indicates that “the focus in a heuristic research quest is on the re-creation of the lived experience, full and complete depictions from the frame of reference of the experiencing person”. My own analysis and interpretation followed Moustakas’ (1990) process, which I believe allowed research findings to emerge.

The first step in my analysis process was, to become immersed in the information to the point where a creative ‘incubation’ brought new understandings of the



phenomenon. Essential to the process of my heuristic analysis was a comprehensive knowledge of all the material for each participant. This began by gathering data from each participant then organising, handling and synthesising it (Moustakas, 1990).

Before transcribing the data or making notes, I listened to the interview tapes for several weeks. I then listened to the tapes again and transcribed the interviews myself, as I felt this would allow me to become fully immersed in the data at a more profound and deeper level. I took notes, identified themes, and returned to the data again and again (Moustakas, 1990). I identified segments of text which contained units of meaning by using highlighter pens to code each unique theme on the transcript. This process enabled me to construct depictions of the participant experience (Moustakas, 1990).

During this time the data was set aside to allow for periods of rest, which included a holiday, and walking in nature, before returning to the data. This process facilitated what Moustakas' (1990 p. 51) describes as the "awakening of fresh energy and perspectives", and allowed tacit and unconscious processes to occur. I found this part of the process powerful and illuminating (Moustakas, 1990) as I connected to each participant, myself, the environment, and the universe around me.

As I began to extract qualities and themes which I had identified in the data (Moustakas, 1990), it was important that I kept asking the question, "does my themed data contain qualities and themes essential to the experience"? Once I had exhausted this question and found that it did, I then moved on to the next participant and the process started again. Once all the individual depictions of each participant's experience had been constructed, I was then able to move to the next stage.

During the next stage I gathered the individual depictions, further reflect, and became immersed in the data to allow the qualities and themes (Moustakas, 1990) of all the

individuals to be experienced, internalised and understood. Again, I identified segments of text which contained units of meaning by using highlighter pens to code each shared and unique themes on the transcripts, this helped to draw out meaning and themes (Moustakas, 1990). Themes emerged from the units of meaning, and I have included verbatim extracts from each participant, as a way of maintaining an individual portrait (Moustakas, 1990) within the outcomes, except where specific details have been changed to protect confidentiality, and anonymity of the participants. This process enabled me to create depictions that represented the common qualities and themes of all participants' experience (Moustakas, 1990).

I hope that this research weaves together themes and insights that reflect the experience of each participant, and enable a deeper understanding of the role spirituality plays within the therapeutic environment and in each participant's lived experience.

### Sample

The four participants were counsellors who have identified with spirituality in the therapeutic environment. Therefore the sample for this research is purposive (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Descombe, 2003), as opposed to a random sample, because the participants selected for inclusion are from a particular setting related to fulfilling the criteria, and also for ethical management. This enabled an in-depth study of the phenomenon in question, whilst expanding the variability due to social, age and counsellors theoretical model. The members of the sample all met the following criteria

## Criteria

- Counsellors who have identified their own spirituality within the therapeutic relationship
- Counsellors who work ethically according to BACP (2010) regulations ie. Supervision and support.
- Participants were invited to share any creativity which links to their own spirituality.

The main variable of the sample include the uniqueness of each individual's experience of spirituality.

## Limitations

I recognise that there are limitations to this study. The time-consuming and labour-intensive nature of, qualitative methods restrict viability to working with small numbers of participants (McLeod, 2003). The main limitations of my research were the small number of participants, and the restricted criteria for selection, namely counsellors who have an awareness of spirituality within the therapeutic environment.

The limitation of words for such a small scale piece of research also needs to be considered when looking in depth at some of the themes that have emerged within the data.

I also accept the limitations of attempting to use myself "transparently" within my research (Etherington, 2004, p. 25). I was committed to "striving for honesty" not only in my "collection and analysis of data" but within my personal reflections (Bond, 2004, p.9) throughout my research.

## Validity and Trustworthiness

It is clear that the concepts of validity and reliability which have been developed for use in quantitative research cannot be applied in the same way in qualitative studies (McLeod, 2003). In order for qualitative research to be taken seriously the subject of the validity and reliability need to be considered in detail. McLeod (2003) notes that qualitative studies need to be judged on their trustworthiness, Maykut and Morehouse (1994) indicate the need to include 'provisions for trustworthiness' which Lincoln & Guba (1985) refer to as the believability of a researcher's findings.

In heuristic inquiry validity is about meaning in relation to the rigorous self-searching and the explication of the co-researchers experience to capture the meaning and essence of this experience (Moustakas, 1990 ) Silverman (1993) emphasises that the "qualitative research methods, if applied appropriately and rigorously, ought to generate reliable results" (cited in Willig 2001, p. 17).

In order for my research to be deemed trustworthy it was vital that the following considerations be included in my research:

Procedures needed to be set out as clearly as possible in order for my research to be seen as plausible.

My research needed to include an historical, social and cultural background in order for my research to be put into context (McLeod 2003; West, 2004). Qualitative research is less interested in defining general scientific laws of universal applicability and more concerned with, developing knowledge that is relevant and useful at particular times and places (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).

Details need to be shown regarding the process of how my findings and outcomes have emerged from the raw data through various phases of data analysis (Mintz , 2010). McLeod (2001) holds the view that research can only be meaningful for readers and participants if it is approached by the researcher with openness and integrity. I have tried throughout this research to remain close to Rogers' core conditions of empathy, congruence and unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1980).

Tape recorded interviews and verbatim transcripts form the bases of the data collection. Moustakadas, (1990, p 181-182) indicates that the material collected must depict the experiences in "accurate, comprehensive, rich and vivid terms". From the original transcript for each participant I extracted meaningful data and for outcomes I used verbatim extracts thematically, which were taken from the individual narratives.

I needed to be aware of my own pre existing biases and prejudices, and I needed to make a reasoned argument as to how my interpretations have come about (Moustakas, 1990; McLeod, 2003).

Since I am the main tool within the research I needed to evaluate my own credibility. McLeod (2003, p. 95) indicates that it is "valuable for qualitative researchers to keep a research diary or journal" (A research journal was kept throughout the process, see appendix VII for extracts). It was vital for me to attend with care to what emerged within the process of my research, owning my reactions and reflections (McLeod, 2001), whilst striving to understand what was in my personal history and my personality that prompted such responses (Adkins, 2002).

West (2004) argues that researchers have a responsibility to remain close to the stories and experiences of their participants. With this in mind, if the explanation of these experiences is to be trustworthy (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) I needed to stay close to the depictions of the participants and enable their unique voice and individuality to provide the reader with a true sense of the person. I hope that this research has enabled the participant's experiences to be heard. I was however constantly aware of how my own understanding of 'spirituality' potentially could influence my perception of the data, testing my capacity to hear challenge and contradiction, and as the process unfolded, I sensed the emergency of a distinctly "different kind of listening" (Morrow, 2007, p. 228).

Maykut and Moorhouse (1994) indicate that making the research transparent by offering detailed description of the research process and outcomes, provide the reader with a basis for judging the credibility of the study. In order to offer some credibility and trustworthiness (McLeod, 2003) to my research I have described my research process and outcomes in detail.

### Ethics

Ethical consideration is paramount in all aspects of research (Bond, 2004). Issues such as confidentiality, care of research participants and self, data protection, and informed consent all need appropriate consideration (West, 2004; West and Burne, 2009; West, 2011). Before commencing my research ethical approval was sought, and obtained from, the Ethics Committee of the department of Social Studies and Counselling at the University of Chester.

From the formulation of the research question, through to the final submission of my dissertation, I firmly believe that I retained an ethical responsibility, and that the

ethical principles of, beneficence, non-maleficence, autonomy and fidelity (BACP, 2010) was respected throughout my research.

Bond (2004) and McLeod (2001) have documented the complexities surrounding the ethical conduct of counselling research:

#### *Trustworthiness*

Bond (2004, p. 10) argues that “the distinctive ethical dimension ...is the trust placed by clients in practitioners”. My research not only took account of the quality of trust required to make the research possible, but also sought the highest possible levels of trustworthiness, and integrity for myself with regard to the relationship with the people being researched and all other people involved directly in the research.

#### *Risk*

Throughout the research process consideration was given to any risks arising from the research (Bond, 2004). I had an ethical responsibility to ensure both participant safety, and my own safety.

My participants were practicing counsellors, worked ethically in accordance with BACP (2010) requirements, and had their own self care in place. However, I established prior to my interviews, what support systems participants had in place should any issues arise from my research that may impact on participants.

#### *Informed Consent*

All participants were informed of their right to give or withhold their consent in any research undertaken (Bond, 2004). Full and adequately informed consent was obtained before any contribution to my research (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994), (see appendix VIII). Participants were fully informed about all research procedures and

consideration was given to cultural and linguistic barriers to any consent obtained (Bond, 2004).

#### *Protection of Personal Information*

A major ethical concern for researchers is the adequate protection of personal sensitive information about identifiable individuals (Bond, 2004). Careful consideration was given to, restricting the collection, storage and use of data gathered (Marshall & Rossman, 1999); the accuracy of data, providing protection for the data against unauthorised access, and limiting the duration of the storage of any data to the purpose or time limit for which consent has been given (Bond, 2004). For the purpose of my research, data was secured in a locked cabinet with only myself having access, and will be kept for 5 years in accordance with The University of Chester's policy.

#### *Anonymity of Research Participants - Confidentiality*

Maintaining confidentiality is vital to enable respect and prevention of harm to research participants (McLeod, 2003). Throughout my research care was taken to avoid revealing the identity of any participants (McLeod, 2003). The processes ensuring confidentiality were explained in detail to each participant, including anonymising data by using a pseudonym, removing third party information and data relating to places and names which could connect with the participant.

#### *Responsibility to Self*

As my research methodology directly involves myself, careful consideration was given to my own personal challenges and vulnerability in carrying out the research (Mintz, 2010). Adequate personal and professional support by way of appropriate supervision was in place. This is imperative when carrying out research in order for



any ethical issues to be addressed (Mintz, 2010). Supervision was undertaken which enabled me to explore the research process, and explore and make sense of questions or decisions to be made when carrying out my research (Mintz, 2010).

### *Competence*

My competence in the design, planning and conduct of my research was necessary to safeguard the wellbeing of participants, and to ensure that the investment of time and effort made by them resulted in meaningful and valid contribution to knowledge (McLeod, 2003).

### *Research Governance*

Consideration to research governance was given throughout the research. This reminds researchers, that the quest for good practice in research requires not only the commitment of researchers to work to the highest possible standards as individuals, but also for researchers to collaborate effectively with other researchers (Bond, 2004). The purpose of research governance is to safeguard public confidence in research and the services studied by:-

‘Enhancing ethical and academic quality; promoting good practice; reducing adverse incidents and ensuring that lessons are learned; preventing poor performance and misconduct’ (Bond, 2004, p. 17).

The following chapter provides themes and categories that emerged out of the data collection.

## Chapter 4

### Outcomes

Overview of Participants

Themes

This chapter presents the themes and categories that emerged from the data analysis. The distinct themes were:

#### **Connection, Transcendence/Mystical, and Definitions.**

Appendix IX gives an overview of themes and sub headings emerging within the outcomes.

I have broken the individual narratives up into themes as a way of reflecting the emergent outcomes of the interview and to give participants a voice. All quotations are verbatim except where specific details have been changed or omitted to protect confidentiality and anonymity of the participants.

#### Overview of Participants

I interviewed four counsellors who have identified with their own spirituality both within the therapeutic relationship, and in their daily lives. I have given each participant a pseudonym in order to protect each participant's identity. These are as follows: M – Mary    S - Susan    D – David    C – Charles.

Mary is 45 years of age, and has been working as a Person Centred counsellor for over 5 years. Mary is also a practicing XXXX. At the beginning of our interview Mary stated:-

*“Spirituality is really important to me, it’s a huge part of my life, and has been for many years....” (M pg. 1)*

Susan is 59 years of age, and has been working as a counsellor for over 20 years. Mary describes herself as a Mystic and finds herself at peace in the XXXX movement. At the beginning of our interview Susan stated:-

*“I think what makes sense to me is describing myself as a Mystic (S. pg. 1)*

Charles is 42 years of age, and has been working as a counsellor for over 10 years. Charles indicated at the beginning of our interview he felt his spirituality was based on humanity:-

*“I think it’s based on humanity really. Spirituality used to mean religion to me and I’m not religious.... I don’t observe religious rituals”. (C.p.1)*

David is 56 years of age, and has been working as a counsellor for over 15 years. David is a practicing XXXX. At the beginning of our interview David indicated:

*“I find it very hard to actually describe spirituality, with me it’s more of a feeling... I have this word oceanic” (D.pg.1)*

## **Themes**

### **Connection**

For all four participants ‘connection’ was really important for them. This was not just connection with the client in the therapeutic environment, but connection with ‘all that is’.

#### *Within Counselling*

*“...counselling to me is a really good way of connecting with people” (M.pg.5)*

*“I have this heightened sense of spirituality...I have his heightened sense of connection with certain clients...” (M.pg. 10)*

*“Counselling enables me to become more connected to that voice, and to act upon it.....empathy is connecting with somebody’s spirit.... connecting on another level....” (M. Pg. 14)*

*“its more a connection, a feeling of connectivity to other people” (D. pg. 1)*

*“... it’s {spirituality} something that’s very important ... it enables me to connect with other people” (C. pg.1)*

*“In terms of my work I believe that it enables me to offer a much greater level of empathy (C. p. 8)*

*It informs my work” (C. p.8)*

*“I can experience it and sense it in the room with clients..” (S. pg. 20-21)*

*“...I quite like Martin Buber’s I-Thou as a way of talking about these events.....something about how two people relate or can relate and there are a lot of those moments when a lot of us would put the word spiritual to when there’s real connection being made and when there’s some real potential transformation happening” (S. pg. 23-24)*

*“I’m inspired from outside, I would argue and with clients sometimes images turn up that aren’t mine maybe they come from between us maybe they come from the in between..... it could come from the inter*

*connection the between ..... an area... where advanced empathy and the word intuition... the word presence or tenderness .... it feels more of a spiritual and its over the edge of who I am it could be a dwelling in the interconnection... it could be I-Thou....”(S. pg. 25)*

With “all that is”

*“..this feeling of being at one with everything else.. this oceanic effect.....its everything, it’s not just other people it’s oneness with everything else” (D. pg. 1-2)*

*“Being in connection with earth..... it’s something that enables me to have contact with the earth with doing something.....connection to the soil, I’d be lost without it” (C. p.2-3)*

*“... that connection with the ground, the earth, senses.. being around environment of acceptance, enables me to accept that element of earth too, the world too” (C. pg. 5)*

*“feeling inter-connected with the whole of creation, seeing human auras, seeing energy fields around people, seeing colours.....feeling a sense of the Divine and a presence of the Divine a sense of life being purposeful “(S. pg. 1)*

*“Involved with spiritual healing “(S. p. 12)*

*“I just look at this blossom and I’m bowled over you know “the energy in that tree just kind of knocks me sideways.. the connection to nature.....” (S. pg. 14)*

“... this business of interconnectedness... it’s not just me and you in the room but it’s ... there’s an inter action between me and the moon....“Wordsworth and his spiritual experience that’s me and the trees in the Park” (S. pg.22)

## **Transcendence/Mystical**

All four participants reflected on their own transcendence and mystical experiences which have had a huge impact on their life and their work as counsellors.

### *Being Helped*

*“I often feel when I’m working, not all the time, but a lot of the time when I’m working with clients I don’t feel that I’m on my own with them”.(Mp. 9-10)*

*“It’s definitely something more in tune than me with what’s going on “(M. p. 11)*

*“Experience has taught me to trust that voice and to use it in the process of counselling”(M . p.12)*

*I’m given words to say, I’m inspired from outside.... sometime images turn up that aren’t mine..... I often wonder sometimes if I’m helped” (S. p. 25*

*I get an image it came from nowhere it was almost like it was passed to me in a symbolic form” (S. p. 27)*

*“... I’m given words to say I’m inspired from outside... with clients sometimes images turn up that aren’t mine .....in that moment of being helpful I often*

*see as spiritual.... and some insights I get are certainly more than I am capable of.... “(S.p.27)*

*“Suddenly this immense feeling of ‘it just doesn’t matter’, as if some enormous weight had been lifted off my shoulders, and I just started to smile...It was as if I saw something that was just so crystal clear. I don’t know where it came from, it lasted for about an hour.. it had such an enormous effect on me” (D.p. 3)*

### *The Presence of Others*

*“I’ve seen people who have died...I’ve never met them, but I saw them and described them to people and that was the way they looked” (C. p. 12)*

*“My mother died in 2003 ..... then my father was ill... the day he died I went towards his bed and my mother was there, I saw my Mother, she looked younger....After my father died I saw him in the night, he looked happy.... those are the most powerful ones” (C. p. 13)*

### *Nature*

*“Simply to experience being there, the sounds, the sights, the smell of the earth “(C. p.3)*

*“being out in nature and almost feeling, well being part of it, not separated from it.... yes very connected, yes very part of it....” (C. pg. 16)*

*“I’m walking in the park... I just look at this blossom and I’m bowled over... The energy of that tree just kind of knocks me sideways....” (S. p. 14)*

*"I can experience or sense that interaction between me and the moon.....with clients in the room... " (S. p. 20)*

### *Triggers*

*"I break up with my partner... and I'm really miserable...I'm 21 and I'm thinking my life's over... I go through this really miserable time... I'm walking in the park... and I just look at this blossom and I'm bowled over you know the energy in that tree just kind of knocks me sideways... and somehow that raises me out of this grieving "(M. p. 14)*

*"I was going through these enormous worries... "(D.p. 3*

*"it could have come at any other times, but that one time when I knew I was on the verge of terrible things about to happen in my life, and it was there, it was there to give me strength" (D. p. 19)*

### *Work with Clients*

*"It [counselling] appealed to my sense of Christianity.....my counselling came really ..... and through the sort of spiritual side of wanting to help other troubled souls"(M. p. 6)*

*to be an effective counsellor you need to be constantly aware of where you are in yourself and that is connecting me to my spiritual self more..... they compliment each other , they inter twine...". (M. p.9)*



*"I couldn't leave my faith at the door and my faith is my spirituality and its part of me, me that's in the relationship so all of it goes in there none of it is left at the door "(M.p. 16)*

*"the counselling then was almost an extension of, it was a feeling of, it was almost that feeling once I'd had that feeling I wanted to do something where I was helping others "(D.p.7)*

*"by attending to my own needs then the spirituality remains alive. So if I notice that I'm giving more to other people.....that has an impact on my work" (C.p.2)*

*"It's enabled me to be more accepting....I have accepted I suppose maybe a deeper spirituality... so yes it has had an impact" (C.p.6)*

*"..if I hadn't have been so open to my own sense of spirituality whether that experience for her would have happened because I wouldn't have given it the time and space.." (C.p.11)*

## **Definition**

All four participants were able to describe, in their own terms, what spirituality was. This appeared to be different in some ways, but the same in others. Three participants had a religious faith and one observed no religious practice. However, all four indicated a 'connection' to something greater than themselves, which is covered in the theme within these outcomes.

## *Overall Definition*

Within their spirituality all four participants had a common theme of search and discovery.

*“...culmination of the search was becoming a XXXX “(M. pg. 2)*

*“,.. it felt like home to me” (Mpg.3)*

*“starting searching “(D.p3)*

*“Discover meaning... Religious journey” (S. p.2)*

*“as if I’d found something of a home....” (S. p13)*

*“a degree of searching for a forum that would offer me that development opportunity” (C.p.7)*

*“Spirituality is really important to me, it’s a huge part of my life and has been for many years....My spirituality is Christian .... has taken various twists and turns but .... always come back to the Christianity”. (M.p. 1)*

*“Relationship with something greater or powerful ... revelation – awakening (M.p.2)*

*I trained in Person Centred Counselling because it appealed to my spiritual self and the initial core conditions.... were all experiences that I have in my relationship with my God" (M. pg. 7)*

*"...it would give me a lot of strength knowing that there was something there, there was something I could fall back on if I needed to" (D.p.3)*

*".. a touchstone...I looked into "another dimension about how things could really be" (D. pg. 3)*

*"I think what makes sense to me is describing myself a Mystic inter-connection...seeing human auras ... energy fields .....colours around people ... presence of the Divine ..." (S. p. 1)*

*"Discover meaning.... sensing knowing of the inter connection. Religious journey.... hung up on the words... Stumbled across XXXX and they are not hung up on the words...I don't know whether I'm a Christian..... a common meeting place" (S.p.5)*

*Spiritual experience... does change who I am. Spiritual experiences are like a teacher... I feel like I am closer to my truer self, and in that sense a return to a truer experience of myself....." (S. p.30)*

*"a more fulfilling way to live" (S. p. 4)*

*"Stumbling across that XXXX meeting was life changing .. there's a whole thing going on for me around my spirituality as if I'd found something of a home...".(S. p. 12-13)*

*"I think it's based on humanity. Spirituality used to mean religion to me and I'm not religious....I don't observe religious rituals" (C.p. 1)*

*"It's something very important to nurture..... it's fragile ... it's precious enables me to connect with other people "(C. p. 1)*

*"By attending to my own needs then the spirituality remains alive " (C.p.20)*

*"I would be lost without it" (C. p.3)*

*"I hadn't realised how important it has been over the years but it is"(C. p.4)*

*"It does feel very real" (C. 12)*

### *Difficulties*

*"It's hard to describe the whole spirituality in my life" (M. p.15)*

*...hard to describe... connection – feeling of connection to other people....  
feeling of being at one with everything else... oceanic effect..Feeling of just  
being on the same level... "(D. p. 1)*

*"Religion is a dodge thing to talk about" (S.p.9)*

*"Connection between spirituality and mental health..The persecution of  
Witches" culture of not talking about it" (S.p.6)*

Appendix X has more samples of the emerging themes and sub-categories that are relevant to this research.

The following chapter provides a discussion of my findings. I have structured the discussion by following the themes of the outcome and grounding the discussion in the data and literature.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

This chapter will outline the findings, and discuss the main themes that emerged from the participants' taped interview. Throughout the heuristic process (Moustakas, 1990) I was constantly aware of the word limitations of this research topic. This limitation on words left me in a quandary of how to actually do justice to such a wealth of information, and report accurately what was created throughout the whole process.

My journey from the start of this research has been immensely powerful and enriching, even if, at times, I have been overwhelmed by the wealth of data and the data analysis process. I hope that this heuristic journey (Moustakas, 1990) has enabled me to share the voices of my participants in a respectful and truthful reflective way.

I have structured the discussion by following the themes of the outcomes and grounding the discussion in the data and literature. The main themes that emerged were Connection, Transcendence/Mystical, and the Definition of spirituality.

**Connection** for the four participants was described in terms of feeling connected within the counselling relationship, and with 'all that is'. Thorne (2002, p.90) eloquently writes:

*"For Three precious minutes millions of people throughout the world knew what it means to live the core conditions and to be fully present to each other. For a moment, too, they experienced a mystical and transcendent interconnectedness which spoke of hope beyond despair".*

Interconnectedness is a reality at all levels of human existence (West, 2011). Human connectivity is arguably underpinned by aeons of history and infinite memory in the form of quantum mechanics (Schwartz, 2002). West (2001, p.124) asks the question “how can we not affect the client who sits before us....Ideally we are ‘becoming’ together and can meet the world in connection” For Buber (1958) the I-Thou relationship was essentially spiritual, and God was to be experienced with the in between, connectedness of individuals. One participant discussed this in terms of how two people relate, and where there is potential for some real transformation happening.

The literature defines connection as something that is yearned for. Thorne (2001, p. 438) indicated that spirituality is the “yearning within the human being for meaning, for that which is greater than the encapsulated individual, for interconnection with all that is” Connection for all participants was about relationships whether with people, the environment, or with something greater of beyond oneself.

Within counselling, all four participants indicated that they experienced feelings of connection and inter-connectedness on all levels and with ‘all that is’. Participants described counselling as being a good way of connecting with people, and connecting to their spiritual self. One participant experienced feeling connected with clients in the room, and also being connected with the moon and the universe.

For Rogers (1980) these experiences were described when he introduced the word presence, suggesting that it is a fourth condition, indicating that “... in a slightly altered state of consciousness in the relationship.... my presence is releasing and helping ....it seems that my inner spirit has reached out and touched the spirit of the other.... (Rogers in Kirschenbaum and Henderson, 1990 p. 137). Thorne (1991, 2002) embraces the spiritual implications of presence and introduces the word

'tenderness'. Thorne (1991, p. 77) indicates that "I feel in touch with myself...At such moments I have no hesitation in saying that my client and I are caught up in a stream of love..."

For one participant it was about: *"connection the 'between'..... an area... where advanced empathy and the word intuition... the word presence or tenderness .... it feels more of a spiritual and its over the edge of who I am, it could be a dwelling in the interconnection... it could be I-Thou"..(S. p.25).*

Thorne, (1998, p 213) indicates that the mystical self can be reached through our connection with others and with God "where love, acceptance, cherishing, understanding and compassion are present, God is there and grace is available". For one participant these feelings were described as the initial core conditions being the experiences she has in her relationship with her God.

**Connection to 'all that Is'** is suggested by Rogers (1980) who, with increasing conviction, writes about what he calls, a 'formative tendency' at work in the cosmos which can be observed at every level. Rogers (1980. p. 133) hypothesized:

"There is a formative directional tendency in the universe, which can be traced and observed in Stella space, in crystals, in micro-organisms, in organic life, in human beings.....In human kind it extends from a single cell....to a transcendent awareness of the unity of the cosmic system including man"

Findings in the research aligned with Roger's (1980) hypothesise, as participants described feelings of inter-connection with the whole of creation, connection with the elements of the earth and the world, seeing human auras, energy fields around people, and feelings of being at one with everything, this 'oceanic effect'.

**The Transcendence/Mystical** experience of being helped, the presence of others, nature, triggers and in working with clients will now be discussed.



*“I am compelled to believe that I, like many others,  
have underestimated the importance of this mystical,  
spiritual dimension” (Rogers, 1980: 130)*

Much has been written about transcendence and mysticism (Allman, et al 1992; Assogioli, 1986; Hardy, 1979; Wilber; 1983; Thorne, 1991, 2002 West, 2000, 2004, 2011; Gubi , 2008). In the literature transcendent mysticism speaks of an awareness of a divinity separate from the mystic (Thorne, 1991), although this divinity is sometimes described more in terms of its power, wisdom and love than as a physical presence (Thorne, 1991; West, 2004; Fontana, 2003). The findings of a study referred to earlier by Hay and Heald (1987) indicate that a sizeable percentage of the population confess to having mystical experiences. The outcomes in my research reflect these findings, and also suggest that these types of experiences are prevalent within the therapeutic environment.

Being helped appeared to be significant to all four participants as they described their own transcendent and mystical experiences when working with clients, indicating that they felt they were being helped, not alone when working, and inspired from outside. These discussions struck a cord with my own experiences of being helped by something or someone outside of self, both in the therapeutic relationship, and my work as a holistic therapist, which includes the practice of Reiki. Thorne (1991 p. 67) captures his own understanding of these moments in therapy when the therapeutic encounter becomes a spiritual experience arguing that

“it demonstrates a preparedness and an ability to move between the worlds of the physical, the emotional, the cognitive and the mystical without strain.. it is a quality which transcends...”

Hardy (1979) indicates, that for many, that sense of spiritual relating is characterised by a felt sense of 'something other' that has been traditionally described as a deity with whom one can have a personalised 'I-Thou' relationship. One participant indicated that as a result of being a counsellor, she has become more connected, and able to hear 'that voice' and to trust these experiences in the process of counselling.

The presence of others discussed by the participants, and in the literature appeared to be significant experiences. Johnson (1989) indicates that the transcendent mystical experience includes the presence of other beings. The sixteenth-century Abbess St. Theresa of Avial for example wrote of seeing her deceased parents during one of her mystical episodes (St. Teresa of Avial, 1960). Rogers (1980) in describing his own experiences of observing a 'contact' with his wife Helen's deceased sister, and the 'contact' with Helen after her death, indicated that all these experiences made him more open to the possibility of the continuation of the individual human spirit, and identity beyond death. The outcomes revealed that one participant had seen and does see people who have died, and even though he has never met them before, he is able to describe them. These experiences also include seeing both his dead parents.

Nature was another important experience with the participants. A study carried out by Hardy (1979) indicates that natural beauty was a trigger for mystical experiences. This is demonstrated in Poets with a particular feeling for nature such as William Blake, William Wordsworth and Alfred Lord Tennyson who all write of, finding through nature, a contact with either the divinity of transcendental mysticism, or with the sense of unity experienced in moment of imminence.

Elkins et. al. (1988) indicates a way of being and experiencing comes about through awareness of a transcendent dimension, characterised by values in regard to self, others, nature, life and often created through an awareness of a transcendent 'Ultimate'.

The outcomes concur with these findings as participants, were able to describe their own mystical experiences with nature as, energy from the trees, feeling part of nature, not separated from it, and interactions with the moon. One participant mentioned Wordsworth and her spiritual experiences, feeling this experience was like her own experience of the trees in the park.

During the interview process I remember feeling that "*these are more than mystical experiences, there's a sense of oneness with all of creation*" (Journal extract August 2011 in Appendix VII).

Zaehner, 1971 claims that a widely authenticated fact of the central mystical experience is this sense of unity, a sense of nature in all things or of all things being one. Zaehner, (1971) adds that the experience, at its highest, appears to transcend time and space, and constitutes an infinite mode of existence.

Triggers indicated by the participants and discussed in the literature are felt to play a part in mystical and transcend experiences. Hardy's (1979) study found that in 25 percent of cases respondents indicated that their mystical experiences were triggered by cases of depression and despair. There is growing awareness through research (Swinton, 2001) that spirituality does make a difference to personal health and well-being. Whilst one participant experienced various forms of mysticism and transcendence, two participants indicated that adversity was a trigger for their mystical experiences.

Swinton (2001), in his exploration of mental health problems such as psychotic disorders and depression, indicates that the spiritual needs of patients are now considered in the provision of health care for patients. He stresses, that if mental health practitioners (including Counsellors) are to develop a therapeutic understanding of spirituality, it is necessary to learn to be comfortable with uncertainty and mystery.

Within the counselling context, the outcomes indicated that mystical and transcendent experiences had a huge impact on work with clients. One participant felt, that if he had not been open to his own sense of spirituality, whether his experiences with clients would have happened. Another participant described moments of being helpful to clients as being spiritual as she felt, that some insights she gets are more than she feels she is capable of.

Rogers (1980, p. 129) believed that when he was functioning at his best, something different happened. He indicated that simply his presence was releasing and helpful. "At those moments, it seems that my inner spirit has reached out and touched the inner spirit of the other. Our relationship transcends itself and becomes a part of something larger..."

The outcomes indicate that working on a transcendental level involved 'self-exploration', and 'self- acceptance'. Thorne (1994) indicates that it is this commitment to such a discipline, on the part of the counsellor, which increased the likelihood of a therapeutic relationship, where the transcendental core of the client and counsellor can be brought together resulting in healing energy.

**Definition** of spirituality appeared different for all four participants. There was also some difficulty in defining what spirituality actually was. Elkins, et. al. (1988) research emphasizes spirituality as something that people experience. West (2011, p. 16) in agreement with this indicates that for him spirituality is essentially about experiences “some of which are truly beyond words”.

In study carried out by Hay and Hunt (2000) David Hay reports a cumulative total of 76 per cent of his British respondents experiencing religious or spiritual experiences. However, spirituality is said to be “undoubtedly one of the most misunderstood words in the English Language” (Sperry & Shafranske, 2005, p. 3). Barnum (1998) states that spirituality has many meanings and interpretations that, are difficult to encapsulate in a common definition. Rogers (1980) and Thorne (2001) conceptualise spirituality more in relation to what it is to be fully human, which includes everyday experiences to the transcendent dimensions of our experiences.

O'Murchu (1994, pp. 169-170) defines spirituality as “the human search for meaning and fulfilment in life”. All four participants indicated that their own spirituality was a ‘searching’ to ‘discover meaning’ and two stated that they felt that once they had ‘discovered meaning, it felt like home’. One participant indicated that once she had found ‘it’, ‘it’ felt “*like something of a home*”.

For two of the participants there was clear indication that they connected their spirituality to religion and religious practice. For one participant the culmination of her searching “*was becoming a XXXX*”. However, another participant indicated that he was “*not religious*” and did not “*observe religious rituals*”. One participant indicated that she had found something of a home within her faith where she was able to meet people from both religious and non religious traditions. A study carried out by Shafranske and Molony (1990, p. 74) concluded that over half of their

psychologist respondents regarded their spirituality as an “alternative spiritual path which is not part of organized religion”.

Swinton (2001) indicates that although traditionally spirituality has been understood in religious terms, a wider understanding of spirituality includes but is not defined by institutional religion. Organised religion is viewed as one of a number of vehicles for the expression of religion. However, a broader understanding of spirituality is one of human experience that forms an integral part of every person’s striving to make sense of the world and their life within it (Swinton, 2001). The outcomes suggest, that these understandings incorporate humanistic, existential, and philosophical perspectives, as well as religious and New Age ones.

In the context of counselling participants felt, that having a ‘faith’ or ‘spirituality’ enabled them to connect at a deeper level with clients. One participant indicated that *“counselling... appealed to my spiritual self and the ... core conditions...were all experiences I have in my relationship with my God”*. Another participant felt that the discipline of her faith was perfect ‘discipline’ for being a counsellor. Rogers (1980, p.129) indicates that when he was at his best as a therapist he discovered another characteristic

“when I am closest to my inner, intuitive self ...in touch with the unknown in me ... my presence is releasing and helpful to others... it seems my inner spirit has reached out an touched the inner spirit of the other....”

In West’s (1998a) study over three quarters of the Quaker therapists interviewed said that their spiritual faith gave them something extra when they worked. Two participants clearly felt that they were being helped by something outside of themselves when working with clients. However, Clarkson (1990) indicates that such potential for ‘something extra’ being available is not exclusive to the religiously

minded therapist as the therapeutic encounter can take on the quality of Buber's (1970) I-Thou relationship.

Each tradition has its own language, its own way of expressing what it takes to be true and valid in the spiritual sphere. Gubi, (2004) indicates that the difficulty with definitions is that they have to be communicated through language, one participant indicated that people tend to get hung up on words but when she had discovered XXX she found they did not get hung up on the words and there was a common meeting place for religious and non religious people.

Swinton (2001, p. 13) argues that to understand spirituality it is "necessary to let go of our desire for absolute certainty, neat definitions and universally applicable categories in order to enter into an aspect of human experience that transcends final categorisation". He states that it is difficult to capture spiritual experiences in words. It is tantamount to expressing the inexpressible (Hay, 1982). Once participant described her spirituality as being a relationship with something greater or powerful and that it felt very solid, deep and meaningful.

Hay (2000) found that people in Britain are often reluctant to discuss their spiritual experiences. One participant indicated that she felt "*Religion is a dodgy thing to talk about*". She also felt that there was "*the connection between spirituality and mental health*." Another indicating that he was "*careful who he disclosed things to*" as he did not want to be seen as mad. Swinton (2001) indicates that there is a link with spirituality and mental health and that not all spiritual experiences are seen as positive. Historically, the association between religion, spirituality and psychopathology has not always been a positive one. Freud growing up devoid of any belief in a god or immortality and never felt the need for it, saw religion as essentially a regression to an earlier stage of ego development (Jones 1964).

Freud's negative view of religion saw it as, at best 'a crook cure' (Hay, 1982), and at worst as 'infantile' (Freud, 1963). The link between spirituality and mental health was described by one participant as being the result of memories regarding our own culture ie. the persecution of witches, and "*things we don't don't talk about as Englishmen*". The limitations of this research do not allow for further exploration of the cultural issues surrounding spirituality.

It is clear from the above that the concept of spirituality is no longer confined to religion, nor is the practice of spiritual care necessarily located within any formal religious or spiritual tradition. Spirituality has many different meanings and interpretation which is understood and interpreted in numerous different ways from Christianity to Buddhism to humanism and the New Age (Swinton,2001). Swinton (2001, p. 13) indicates, that "If we are to develop a therapeutic understanding of spirituality it will be necessary to learn to be comfortable with uncertainty and mystery".

There were other themes and categories that emerged from my research, but due to the limitations of this research I have not been able to include. Appendix XI gives an overview of these.

The following conclusion chapter will weave together all the various strands of my research, to produce a solid rope up which further research can climb.



## Chapter 6

### Conclusion and Suggestions for Further Research.

*“The very feeling which has seemed to me most private, most personal, and hence most incomprehensible by others, has turned out to be an expression for which there is a resonance in many other people” (Kirchenbaum and Henderson, 1990, p. 27)*

This research arose from a passion on my part, with regard to spirituality in the counselling relationship; my fascination in endeavouring to understand how people relate and connect with each other (Josselson, 1996); how we interact, how relationships build, how trust within a therapeutic relationship evolves and the unique connection that creates a feeling of transcendence. Rogers (1980, p. 129) indicates that:

*“When I am somehow in touch with the unknown in me... then whatever I do seems to be full of healing.... At those moments it seems that my inner spirit has reached out and touched the spirit of the other. Our relationship transcends itself and becomes part of something larger”.*

The qualitative research approach and Moustakas' (1990) heuristic inquiry, influenced my research, and involved the search for discovery, meaning and essence in significant human experience. Moustakas (1990) indicates that heuristic inquiry begins with “the internal search to discover... a passionate desire to know ... commitment to pursue a question that is strongly connected to one's own identity and selfhood” This searching and passionate desire to know was the basis on which this research was firmly placed. Many threads were constantly weaving the fabric and texture of spiritual awareness, many shades and meanings which this research has

made more accessible, highlights a process that is both personal and in relation to others.

Although this sample was small, I feel it does present a snapshot of the experiences of therapists who are combining their spirituality and the therapeutic relationship. It also offers an informed contribution to those who question whether spirituality exists in the therapeutic relationship.

The results of the research suggest that there is no longer a need to separate the spiritual dimension from the therapeutic process. The literature reviewed, together with my research findings indicate that Rogers (1980) discovered something of ultimate value and truth, and that it would make sense to give spirituality a greater voice in the therapeutic relationship.

Rogers (1980, p. 130) indicated that

“Our experience in therapy involves the transcendent, the indescribably, the spiritual. I am compelled to believe that I, like many others, have underestimated the importance of this mystical, spiritual dimension”

This suggests that the therapeutic relationship and the experiencing process point in the direction of a deeper universal process, and involves a sense of transcendence.

With 76 per cent of the population (Hay and Hunt, 2002) confessing to having mystical experiences, how can therapists fail to acknowledge spirituality and the impact it has on the therapeutic relationship? West (2001, p. 124) asks the question “how can we not affect the client who sits before us... Ideally we are ‘becoming’ together and can meet the world in connection”.

The outcomes suggest that as therapists, our spirituality would appear to encompass many aspects of our ‘self’. Participants in this study indicated that their own

spirituality encompassed many aspects of themselves, from their faith to a connection to 'all that is', with the core conditions of the therapeutic relationship being perceived in sacred terms, and therefore there is an indication that spirituality can potentially unfold in the therapeutic relationship.

The distinct themes that emerged from the data were:

- Connection
- Transcendence/Mystical
- Definitions

Considering the significance of the above, indicated in the research findings, and within the literature reviewed, the question I would pose is how do we as therapists work to cultivate an enhanced quality of spirituality. I would suggest that, during training and beyond, we should attend more fully to the potential impact spirituality has on clients and on ourselves as therapists. In extending the theory and practice of psychotherapy by exploring the spiritual dimensions of human development in ways suggested by Rogers, (1980), Thorne, (2002), Swinton (2002), and West, (2004, 2011), may support the development of an increasingly critical understanding of the reality of spirituality within the therapeutic relationship.

The more we are able to understand the role of spirituality within the therapeutic relationship, the more we may develop the capacity to offer one of the most profound aspects of the therapeutic encounter (Rogers, 1980). Further studies might strive to understand the reality of spirituality; how it impacts on both client and counsellor, and how counsellors might be attuned to their own spirituality within the relationship.

Further findings within my research are provided in appendix XI, but due to the limitations of this research, I have not included in the main body. I believe that these

would also benefit from further research, as they would expand on the impact spirituality has on the therapeutic relationship.

The growth of spiritual interest within the general population suggests that there is a need for counsellors to incorporate spirituality into the therapeutic relationship (Richards & Bergin, 1997). Thorne's (1991, p. 127) bold statement indicates that "the future of the person centred approach may well depend on its capacity to embrace the world of spiritual reality" I believe my research has gone some way towards endorsing the effectiveness and credibility of spiritual awareness in the therapeutic relationship.

## Epilogue

This research arose from my passion to know and understand how spirituality and the therapeutic relationship weaved together. I began my MA course with no clear agenda other than to challenge myself both personally and professionally. I knew the research element of the course would place huge demands upon my time and energies, and having never wandered into the realms of further education, the research process felt daunting and unachievable.

The process of research itself has been demanding of my time and resources, and often I have had to push myself to continue. There were days when I really enjoyed the work, discovering new meaning when someone said something, or I saw something in nature (my owl) which helped illuminate my work. However, there were also days when I could hardly do any work, just going through the motions, doubting what I was doing or where it was leading. It felt at times like moving from chaos to order, order to chaos.

In deconstructing the data then reconstructing it, it felt like parts of me were being deconstructed and then reconstructed, as new data emerged that impacted on my own unique experience. The process of collecting and analysing the data, searching, and reading the literature, and weaving together the various strands to form meaning and relevance felt like climbing Everest without oxygen, entering the death zone, and then finally reaching the top.

Many threads were constantly weaving the fabric and texture of spirituality, many shades and meaning emerged as the research progressed. It has been an invaluable experience to meet other therapists and to hear their own stories, and I am indebted

to them. I believe my research has gone some way towards endorsing the effectiveness and credibility of spiritual awareness in the therapeutic relationship.

## References

- Adkins, L. (2002). *Reflexivity and the politics of qualitative research*. In T. May *Qualitative research in action* (pp. 332-348). London: Sage
- Allman, S., de la Rocha, O., Elkins, D., & Weathers, R.S. (1992). *Psychotherapist attitudes towards clients reporting mystical experiences*. *Psychotherapy*, 29, 564-569
- Ankrah, I. (2002). 'Spiritual emergency and counselling: an exploratory study'. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 2(1): 55-60
- Argyle, M. & Beit-Hallahmi, B. (1975). *The social psychology of religion*. London: Routledge
- Assagioli, R. (Eds). (1965). *Psychosynthesis*. London: Aquarian/Thorsons.
- Assagioli, R. (1986) 'Self-realisation and psychological disturbance'. *Revision* 8(2):21-31
- BACP, (2010). *Ethical framework for good practice in counselling and psychotherapy*. Lutterworth: BACP
- Bailey, E. (1999). 'What has spirituality got to do with the church' [www.biblesociety.org.uk](http://www.biblesociety.org.uk)
- Barnum, B. (1998). *Spirituality in nursing from traditional to new age*. New York: Springer
- Bartoli, E. (2007). *Religious and spiritual issues in psychotherapy practice: training the trainer*. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, 44(1), 54-65
- Bergen, A.E. & Jensen, J.P. (1990). 'Religiosity of psychotherapists: a national survey'. *Psychotherapy*, 27: 3-7
- Boorstien, S. (Ed.). (1986). *Transpersonal psychotherapy*. Palo Alto, CA: Science & Behaviour Books
- Bond, T. (2000). *Standards and ethics for counselling in action* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). London: Sage
- Bond, T. (2004). *Ethical guidelines for researching counselling and psychotherapy*. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research* 4(2), 10-19
- Buber, M. (1958). *I and Thou*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Charles Scribner's Sons
- Buber, M. (1970). *I and Thou*. Edinburgh: Clark
- Chaplin, J. (1989). 'Rhythm and blues' in W. Dryden & L. Spurling (eds), *On becoming a psychotherapist*. London: Routledge
- Christie-Murray, D. (1978). *Voices from the gods*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul
- Clark, F.V. (1979). *Exploring intuition: prospects and possibilities* *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 5(2): 156-170

- Clarkson P. (1990). *A multiplicity of therapeutic relationships*' British Journal of Psychotherapy 7(2): 148-163
- Clarkson, P. (1995). *The therapeutic relationship*. London: Whurr
- Cox, M. (1983). *Mysticism: The direct experience of God*. Wellingborough: Aquarian Press
- Descombe, M. (2003). *The good research guide (2<sup>nd</sup> ed)*. Maidenhead: Open University Press
- Douglass, B.G. & Moustakas, C. (1985). *Heuristic inquiry: The internal search to know*. The Journal of Humanistic Psychology 23, 3, 39-55
- Edwards, G. (1992). 'Does psychotherapy need a soul?' in W. Dryden and C. Feltham (eds), *Psychotherapy and its discontents*. Buckingham: Open University Press
- Elkins, D.N., Hedstorm, J.L., Hughes, L.L., Leaf, J.A. and Saunders, C. (1988). 'Towards a humanistic-phenomenological spirituality'. Journal of Humanistic Psychology 28(4):5-18
- Etherington, K. (2000). *Narrative approaches to working with male survivors of sexual abuse; the client's, the counsellor's and researcher's story*. Jessica Kingsley
- Etherington, K. (2004). *Becoming a reflexive researcher using ourselves in research*. London: Jessica Kingsley
- Farrow, J. (1984). 'Spirituality and self awareness. The Friends Quarterly, July: 312-23
- Fontana, D. (2003). *Psychology, religion, and spirituality*. Oxford: Blackwell Books
- Frick, W. (1983). *The symbolic growth experience*. Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 23, 108-125
- Frankl, V. E. (1947). *The Unconscious god*. New York: Simon & Schuster
- Frankl, V. E. (1973). *The doctor and the soul, from psychotherapy to logotherapy*. London: Sage
- Frankl, V.E. (1978). *Man's search for meaning*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.
- Freud, S. and Pfister, O. (1963). *Psycho-analysis and faith*. London: Hogarth Press
- Fukuyama, M.A., & Sevig, T.D. (1999). *Integrating spirituality into multicultural counselling*. London: Sage
- Glaser, B.G., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory*. Chicago: Aldine
- Grof, S. & Grof, C. (1989). *Spiritual Emergency*. Los Angeles: Tarcher.
- Grof, S. (1972). *Varieties of transpersonal experiences: observations from LSD psychotherapy*. Journal of transpersonal psychology, 4(1): 45-80



- Gubi, P.M. (2002). *'Practice behind closed doors – challenging the taboo of prayer in mainstream counselling culture'* Journal of Critical Psychology, Counselling and Psychotherapy 2,2, 97-104
- Gubi, P.M. (2004). *'Surveying the extent of, and attitudes towards, the use of prayer as a spiritual intervention among British mainstream counsellors.* British Journal of Guidance and Counselling 32, 4, 461-476
- Gubi, P.M. (2008). *Prayer in counselling and psychotherapy.* London: Jessica Kingsley
- Guest, H. (1989). *'The origin of transpersonal psychology'*. British Journal of Psychology, 6(1): 62-69
- Halmos, P. (1965). *The faith of the counsellor.* London: Constable
- Hardy, A. (1979). *The spiritual nature of man.* Oxford: Clarendon
- Hay, D. (1982). *Exploring inner space : Scientists and religious experiences.* Hamondsworth: Penguin
- Hay, D., & Heald, G. (1987). *Religion is good for you.* New Society, 17 April.
- Hay, D., & Hunt, K. (2000). *Understanding the spirituality of people who don't go to church* (Centre for the Study of Human Relations, Nottingham University)
- Hay, D. Morisy, A. (1978). *Reports of ecstatic, paranormal, or religious experiences in Great Britain and the United States – a comparison of trends'*. Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 17(3): 225-268
- Hayes, M.A. & Cowie, H. (2005). *Psychology and religion: mapping the relationship.* Mental Health Religion & Culture, 8(1), 27-33
- Heelas, P., & Woodhead, L. (2005) (Eds.). *The spirituality revolution why religion is giving way to spirituality.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing
- Hendricks, G. & Weinhold, B. (1982). *Transpersonal approaches to counselling and psychotherapy.* Colarado: Love
- Herman, N. ((1987). *Why psychotherapy?* London: Free Association
- Heron, J. (1992). *Feeling and personhood.* London: Sage
- Jantzen, G. (2000). *Julian of Norwich.* (2<sup>nd</sup> eds.) London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.
- Johnson, R. (1971). *The imprisoned splendour.* London: Hodder & Stoughton
- Jones, E. (1964). *The life and work of Sigmund Freud.* Harmondsworth: Penguin
- Josselson, R. (1996). *The space between us. exploring the dimensions of human relationships.* London: Sage

- Jung, C.G. (1931). *The spiritual problems of modern man*. London: Routledge
- Jung, C.G. (1933). *Modern man in search of a soul*. London: Routledge
- Jung, D.G. (1969). *Psychology and religion: east and west*. London: Routledge
- King-Spooner, S., & Newnes, C. (Eds). (2001). *Spirituality and psychotherapy*. Ross-on-Wye: PCCS Books
- Kirschenbaum, H., & Henderson, V.L. (1990) *The carl rogers reader*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin
- Lincoln, Y.S. & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic enquiry*. London: Sage
- Lofland, J. (1971). *Analysing social settings*. Belmont. CA: Wadsworth
- Maluccio, A. (1979). *Learning from Clients: Interpersonal Helping as Veiwed by Clients and Social Workers*. New York: Free Press
- Marshall, C. & Rossman G.B. (1999). *Designing qualitative research (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.)*. London: Sage
- Maslow, A. H. (1970). *Religions, values and peak experiences*. New York: Viking
- Maslow, A. (Ed.). (1971). *The farther reaches of human nature*. Arkana: Penguin
- Maykut, P., & Morehouse, R. (1994). *Beginning qualitative research. A philosophic and practical guide*. London: Falmer Press
- McLennan, N., Rochow, S., & Arthur, N. (2001). *Religious and spiritual diversity in counselling*. Guidance and Counselling, 16(4), 132-144
- McClure, K. (1983). *The evidence for visions of the virgin mary*. Wellingborough: Aquarian Press
- McLeod, J. (1993). *Introduction to counselling*. Buckingham: Open University Press
- McLeod, J. (1994). 'The research agenda for counselling' Counselling, 5(1): 41-3
- McLeod, J. (1997). *Narrative and psychotherapy*. London: Sage
- McLeod, J. (1998). *Introduction to counselling*. Buckingham: Open University Press
- McLeod, J. (2001). *Qualitative research in counselling and psychotherapy*. London: Sage
- McLeod, J. (2003). *Doing counselling research*. London: Sage
- Mearns, D. (1994). *Developing person-centred counselling*. London: Sage
- Mearns, D., & Cooper, M. (2005). *Working at relational depth in counselling and psychotherapy*. London: Sage

- Mearns, D. & Thorne, B. (2000). *Person-centred therapy today: New frontiers in theory and Practice*. London: Sage
- Mearns, D. & McLeod, J. (1984). 'A person-centred approach to research', in R. Levant and J. Shlien (eds), *Client-centred therapy and the person centered approach: New direction in theory and practice*. New York: Praeger. pp. 370-89)
- Miles, M.B. & Huberman, A, (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: A sourcebook of new methods*. London: Sage
- Mintz, R. (2010) *Introduction to conducting qualitative research (R14 Information Sheet)*. Retrieved from the BACP website: [www.bacp.org.uk](http://www.bacp.org.uk)
- Miovic, M. (2004). *An introduction to spiritual psychology: Overview of emerging research field*. *American Psychologist*, 58(1), 24-35
- Morrow, S.L. (2007). *Qualitative research in counselling psychology: Conceptual foundations*. *The Counselling Psychologist*. 35(2) pp. 209-232
- Moustakas, C. (1990). *Heuristic research. design, methodology and applications*. London: Sage
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Narayanasamy, A. (2002). *Spiritual coping mechanisms in chronically ill patients*. *British Journal of Nursing*, 11(22), 1461-1467
- O'Murchu, D. (1994). *Spirituality, recovery & transcendental meditation*. *Alcohol Treatment Quarterly*, 11 (1 & 2) 169-170
- Patton, M.Q. (1991). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)*. New York: Sage
- Polanyi, M. (1962). *Personal knowledge*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Polanyi, M. (1983). *The tacit dimension*. Gloucester. MA : Peter Smith
- Punch, K.F., (2000). *Developing effective research proposals*. London: Sage
- Quest, P. (2002). *Reiki for Life*. London: Piatkus
- Rankin, P. (Ed.). (2005). *Buried spirituality*. Salisbury Wiltshire: Sarum College Press
- Reeves, A. (2010). *Walking the walk, talking the talk*. University of Chester Counselling Society. October, 2010
- Reason, P. (1994). *Participation in human inquiry*. London: Sage
- Reason, P. & Rowan (1981). *Human inquiry: A sourcebook of new paradigm research*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons

- Richards D.S. & Bergin, A. E. (1997). *Spiritual strategy for counselling and psychotherapy*. Washington: American Psychological Association
- Richards, D.S. & Bergin, A.E. (2005). *A spiritual strategy for counselling and psychotherapy*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Washington DC: APA
- Robinson, S., Kendrick, K., & Brown, A. (Eds.). (2003). *Spirituality and the practice of healthcare*. Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan
- Rogers, C.R. (1980). *A way of being*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin
- Rogers, C.R. (1957). *The necessary of sufficient conditions of therapeutic personality change*. *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, 21: 95-1-3
- Rowan, J. (1983). *'The real self and mystical experiences'*. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 23(2): 9-27)
- Rowan, J. (1992). *The transpersonal, psychotherapy and counselling*. London: Routledge
- Schwartz, G. (2002). *The afterlife experiments : Breakthrough scientific evidence of life after death*. New York: Atria Books
- Shafranske, E.P., & Gorsuch, R.L. (1984). *'Factors associated with the perception of spirituality in psychotherapy'*. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* 16, 231-241
- Shafranske E. P., & Malony, H.N. (1990). *'Clinical psychologists' religious and spiritual orientations and their practice of psychotherapy'*. *Psychotherapy*, 27 (1): 72-8
- St. Theresa of Avila (1960). *The life of Theresa of Jesus*. New York: Doubleday
- Stiles, W. (1993). *'Quality control in qualitative research'*. *Clinical Psychology Review* 13, 593-618
- Skovholt, T.M. & Ronnestad, M.H. (1992). *The evolving professional self: Stages and themes in therapist and counselor Development*. New York: Wiley
- Sperry, L., & Shafranske, E.P. (Eds.). (2005). *Spiritual oriented psychotherapy*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Swinton, J. (2001). *Spirituality and mental health care, rediscovering a 'forgotten' dimension*. London: Jessica Kinglsey
- Thorne, B. (1991). *Person-centred counselling: Therapeutic and spiritual dimensions*. London: Whurr
- Thorne, B. (1994). *Developing a spiritual discipline*. London: Whurr
- Thorne, B. (1998). *Person-centred counselling and christian spirituality: The secular and the holy*. London: Whurr
- Thorne, B. (2001). *A personal view the prophetic nature of pastoral counselling*. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 29(4)

- Thorne, B. (2002). *The mystical power of person-centred therapy*. London: Whurr
- Van Belle, H.A. (1990). 'Rogers' later move towards mysticism, implications for client-centred therapy'. G. Lietaer and R. Van Balen (eds). *Client-centred and experiential psychotherapy in the nineties*. The Netherlands: University of Leuven
- Vaughan, R. (1986). *The inward arc, healing and wholeness in psychotherapy and spirituality*. California: Shambhala
- Walsh, R. (1994). *The making of a shaman: calling, training and culmination*'. Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 34(3): 7-30.
- Walsh, R. (1996) 'The problem of unconsciousness in qualitative research' British Journal of Guidance and Counselling 24, 3, 377-384
- Walsh, R. (1999). *Essential spirituality*. New York: Wiley
- West, W. (1994). *Integrating psychotherapy and healing*. British Journal of Guidance and Counselling, 26(3)
- West, W. (1997). *Integrating counselling, psychotherapy and healing: An inquiry into counsellors and psychotherapists whose works includes healing*' British Journal of Guidance and Counselling 25(3): 291-312
- West, W. (1998a). *Critical subjectivity: Use of self in counselling research*. Counselling, 9 (3), 228-230
- West, W. (2000). *Psychotherapy & Spirituality: Crossing the line between therapy and religion*. London: Sage
- West, W. (2001b) *Beyond grounded theory: the use of a heuristic approach to qualitative research*. Counselling and psychotherapy research, 1(2), 126-131
- West, W. (2002a). 'Being present to our clients' spirituality'. Journal of Critical Psychology, Counselling and Psychotherapy 2(2): 86-93
- West, W. (2004). *Spiritual issues in therapy. Relating experience to practice*. Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan
- West, W. (2007). *The role of the researcher and methodological choices: Pragmatics, Russell, Einstein and Newton*'. Journal of Critical Psychology, Counselling and Psychotherapy 7(3): 168-74
- West, W. (2011). *Exploring therapy, spirituality and healing*. Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan
- West, W. & Burne, J. (2009). 'Some ethical concerns and counselling research. Counselling Psychology Quarterly 22(3): 309-18
- Wilber, K. (1979b). 'A developmental view of consciousness'. Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, 11(1): 1-21
- Wilber, K. (1980). *The atman project*. Illinois: Quest

Wilber, K. (1983). *A sociable god, towards a new understanding of religion*. Colorado: Shambhala

Willing, C. (Ed). (2008). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology (2<sup>nd</sup> ed)*. Berkshire: Open University Press

Zaehner, R.C. (1971). *Mysticism sacred and profane*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

## Appendix I

Percentages of people in the UK reporting various religious experiences (adapted from Hay and Heald, 1987)

Type of Experience	Percentage Reporting Experience
Awareness of:	
God's presence	27
Help received in response to prayer	25
A guiding presence not called God	22
The presence of someone who has died	18
A sacred presence in a nature	16
An evil presence	12
The unity of all things	5

## Appendix II

Frequency of report of religious or spiritual experiences in Britain for the years 1987 and 2000, taken from Hay and Hunt (2000)

	1987(%)	2000(%)
A patterning of events	29	55
Awareness of the presence of God	27	38
Awareness of prayer being answered	25	37
Awareness of a sacred presence in nature	16	29
Awareness of the presence of the dead	18	25
Awareness of an evil presence	12	25
Cumulative total	48	76



## Appendix III

### The Phases of Heuristic Research

“The first phase of heuristic research is that of initial engagement. This involves a process of clarifying what it is we want to research. Moustakas suggest that we need to engage in self-dialogue about what we want to research. He regards it very much with a process of inner searching and that it is something that should not be hurried. He insists that if we stay with the process the research questions will eventually emerge.

The second stage of heuristics is called immersion. This is the stage in which we really have to live the question, awake, asleep, and in our dreams. We are asked to enter fully into life around the research question and we find synchronous occurrences, when opportunities arise in chance meetings with people to explore our research question. People, places, meetings, and nature all offer us possible understanding of the phenomenon we are researching.

The next stage of the process is that of incubation, in which the researcher retreats from the intense focus on the question and allows tacit, intuitive and often unconscious processing of the research to continue. This allows us to draw on what Polanyi (1962) called ‘tacit knowledge’, that we know more about a phenomenon than we usually allow ourselves to admit and access. As Douglass and Moustakas (1985) put it: “to know, without awareness of how or why one knows, is the sine qua non of tacit knowing” (p. 50). During this incubation it is important to put the research aside and get on with other tasks in one’s life. Physical activities can be a great help such as gardening, walking, or cycling. It is important to trust these tacit processes. At such times it can feel like one has accumulated a mass of data but is unable to make any sense of it.

This stage leads to a moment of illumination, in which new awareness and new insights emerge, resulting in a new synthesis. Moustakas insists that this

is a natural process if one is open to tacit and intuitive knowledge. Qualities and themes relating to the question emerge into consciousness, rather than being forced.

Following from illumination comes the explication stage which is usually somewhat easier. In this stage the task is to fully examine what has emerged, teasing out layers of meaning. Moustakas suggests that we can make use of the method of experiential focusing (Gendlin, 1978) systematically to explore and articulate inner 'felt' discoveries. Certainly there needs to be a process akin to meditation, of indwelling, self-searching, self-disclosure and reflexivity around the research process, as a prelude to putting what has 'arrived' into words.

The final stage is that of creative synthesis. This is where we meet the final challenge to pull all of the research together into some final form that does justice to it. This is a tacit and intuitive process. Moustakas is keen that use a narrative description using quotes and examples to convey truly the research process and finding". (West, 2001, p. 129)

## **Appendix IV**

### **Information Sheet for Research Participants**

**Study Title:** Spiritual Awareness within the Therapeutic Relationship

A Heuristic Exploration of Counsellors who have identified their own spirituality and have an awareness of spirituality within their practice as a Counsellor

A study being undertaken as part of MA Counselling research by:

Noelle Kirk

#### **What is the study about?**

I want to explore the meaning of spirituality and how, and if, these meanings relate and link to relational depth experiences in the therapeutic relationship. Also in relation to practice and therapeutic outcome, is there tangible evidence to suggest that these transcendental moments truly exist and if so, what effect if any, do they have on the level of depth reached in the therapeutic relationship.

The research will seek to reflect on the depth of experience Counsellors have of spiritual presence within the therapeutic relationship in a creative and thoughtful way. Participants will be asked to share their experiences through interview, and by sharing other creative means of expression they may use.

#### **Who will be asked to participate?**

I am seeking to recruit 4-6 Counsellors who have an awareness of their own spirituality within the therapeutic relationship.

#### **What does it involve?**

Participants will be interviewed by myself and invited to submit a piece of writing that reflects their own spirituality, this is an optional part of the research. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Participants will be required to attend one to one interviews at a mutually convenient place with myself. It is intended that there will be an initial interview followed by a taped interview. It is anticipated that the taped interview will last approximately 1- 2 hours. Once the tapes have been transcribed it is intended that they will be sent to the participants to check the accuracy of the

transcribed interview and for participants to decide if they are satisfied with the content.

### **How will the research be used?**

The transcript and written material connected with the research may be seen by Counselling Tutors and External Examiner for the purposes of assessment and moderation. These people are bound by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy. Copies of the dissertation will be held at the University of Chester Library and the Department of Social Studies & Counselling Resource room. Some of the material may be used for publication and/or presentations at conferences and seminars in the future.

### **What are the risks of taking part?**

It is possible that participants may find the process of recalling their experiences difficult and old hurts may surface. Participants will be encouraged to make use of their own personal supervision and counselling in this instance.

### **What are the benefits of taking part?**

The benefits of taking part in this research for participants are to share their experiences and discover some common ground within Counselling practice. It may provide a framework in which to place their practice and, it may also have implications for future research and understanding.

### **Will information collected be confidential?**

Yes. All records will have any reference to participants details deleted so that participants cannot be identified from the reported data.

### **Will there be a right to withdraw from the research?**

Yes. All participants have the right to withdraw from the research at any time without fear of any reprisals or without offering an explanation.

**Who do participants send any complaints to?**

Participants should in the first instance contact the researcher's supervisor at the University of Chester, her details are:

Dr. Valda Swinton,

Research Supervisor,

The Department of Social Studies & Counselling

The University of Chester,

Parkgate Road,

Chester. CH1 4BJ

Telephone 01244 512036

## Appendix V

### MA DEGREE IN CLINICAL COUNSELLING

#### INTERVIEW STRUCTURE

How would you describe your own spirituality?

What do you feel came first your spirituality or your role as a counsellor?

How do you feel your own spirituality informs your practice as a counsellor, and how does working as a counsellor inform your spirituality?

How do you feel that working with spirituality in the therapeutic relationship relates and links to relational depth experience?

Do you see a link between empathy and spirituality?

Anything else you would like to discuss?

## Appendix VI

### MA DEGREE IN CLINICAL COUNSELLING

#### INTERVIEW STRUCTURE

How would you describe your own spirituality?

*Felt sense of lived experience - human experience – the search for meaning and of fulfilment in life – relationship with the universe – the connection to all that is – yearning – authentic self – something beyond self – the search for the sacred .....*

What do you feel came first your spirituality or your role as a counsellor?

*Influences on your decision to become a counsellor – influences on your spirituality*

How do you feel your own spirituality informs your practice as a counsellor, and how does working as a counsellor inform your spirituality?

*Influences on practice – impact of training in counselling with respect to own beliefs*

How do you feel that working with spirituality in the therapeutic relationship relates and links to relational depth experience?

*Experiences – examples – counselling space – relational depth – spiritual – mindfulness – alongside another – meeting another however existential that might be – awareness of own feelings*

Anything else you would like to discuss?

## Appendix VII

Included in this appendix are certain extracts from my personal reflexive journal which I kept throughout my research. I feel that these extracts offer an insight into my own process.

*17<sup>th</sup> June, 2011*

Workshop in Leeds – Working With Spirituality – words – trying to find words for something that is indescribable – words are crumbs from the minds feast – words share meaning of what's going on – words where do they come from – from a spiritual source – are we tuned in to hear these words – I witness the client witnesses – what is it that resonates with my own spirituality – how can I be open to expand the sense of who I am within my own spiritual process – in the room sitting with my client.

*29<sup>th</sup> June 2011*

My first interview – I feel a total connection to XXXX the feelings of being helped by something greater or beyond self are very real, yes a confirmation of my own way of working, that feeling I have, others feel it too. How can I move forward to hear others who may challenge this feeling, it is precious and safe inside, now it feels open to the world to challenge, am I ready for this challenge of my own belief, its time to stand up and be counted, but can I do that, I feel afraid, I sense a vastness opening up and I have to walk the walk and talk the talk. Bearing witness to XXXX story has given me a confidence to trust my own way of working. My grandson born tonight, another being incarnated into this world, gives me a sense of joy a sense of connection to him knowing that life cycle goes on.

*13<sup>th</sup> July 2011*

My second interview – feeling inadequate – questioning how I can be open to these experiences, how can I be open enough to be creative, to hear, to bear witness, this story resonates so deeply with my own experience of connection of belonging to all that is. I must remain open and accepting not filtering any data. Nature surrounds me, it is my teacher. My experience at home working holistically, intuitively knowing what to say, where does that voice come from, this research is testing my trust, my



trust in world around me, a world that is real but unseen. The voices I hear, say this, say that. Wanting to say to my participant, “just go with how you feel, don’t analysis it, or question it in findings, its real” but these are my feelings not his and I must remain silent. I feel my spirit guide is very near to me giving me confidence to just be who I am.

*21 July 2011*

My client yesterday presented with a harrowing tale of darkness and distress, which took my breath away, we connected on a level that I can only describe as transcendental – even though we were in the room together the connection felt outside of ourselves – the words just came, they were given to me as I witnessed my client story unfold, her words of wanting to die, of finding no purpose, but it wasn’t her time the other side wasn’t ready for her, the presence of others in the room gave me peace and hope as it felt like I was stumbling around in the dark with her. My inner spirit reached out and touched hers in the room at that moment. Thorne’s (1991 p. 67) words ring in my ears “a preparedness and ability to move between worlds of the physical, the emotional, the cognitive and the mystical” Confirmed by another feeling the same within this research.

*August 2011*

My holiday and my data has been transcribed, I am spending time alone with the transcripts and listening to the tapes in a new energy abroad, it feels clearer out here with the vastness of the sea really triggering the oceanic effect discussed, that true feeling of connection to all that is. As I listen to the tapes I sense that these are more than mystical experiences, there’s a sense of oneness with all of creation with everything my participants say and feel. Words don’t feel adequate to capture the meaning in their words, its the experience the individual experience which is real very real. It feels too precious to begin to deconstruct then reconstruct it feels like I am being deconstructed and then reconstructed as I immerse myself in this process. Can I do this, can I fully capture the essence and meaning, can I do justice to their experience, it feels too much, too much responsibility.

The owl comes to visit on the roof in front of the villa, its odd because he come in the day. My totem animal is the Owl so I know he is a sign sent to me. Owl sits in the east, the place of illumination. Owl is a symbol for wisdom since Owl can see that which others cannot - Owl asks that I pay attention to signals and omens. To listen to that which is not being said, intuitively to know, to sit with what I have, to become immersed in the process until illumination occurs, to use Owls medicine.

This tacit knowing of knowing more than I can tell, not looking at things in detail but dwelling in them – that's what I do daily when I work holistically and now when I work in my counselling, and now in my process as researcher – I can no longer separate who I am and play different roles, who I am must shine through

*October 2011*

The journey is coming to the end, it feels like the death zone on Everest, hard, overwhelming, concerned to do justice to their experiences. This challenge, this strong connection with their experiences – this research has proved Rogers right when he said “the very feeling which has seemed to me most private, most personal, and hence most incomprehensible by others, has turned out to be an expression for which there is a resonance in many other people (Kirchenbaum and Henderson, 1990a, p.27). I feel a new level of understanding, a deeper connection now, why did I question my own understanding of what was happening in the counselling room, this increased level of self awareness and confidence is developing more and more. My participants have enabled me to move to a new level, my own experience and theirs this resonance drives me forward.

## Appendix VIII

### CONSENT FORM

I ..... hereby give consent for the details of a written transcript based on an audio recorded interview with me and .....to be used in preparation and part of a research dissertation for a MA at the University of Chester. I understand that my identity will remain anonymous and that all personally identifiable information will remain confidential and separate from the research data. I further understand that the transcript may be seen by a Research Supervisor and first and second markers of the research dissertation for the purpose of assessment and moderation. I understand that these people are bound by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy.

I understand that I will have access to the transcribed material should I wish to and would be able to delete or amend any part of it. I am aware that I can withdraw from the interview at any time, and ultimately withdraw the interview before the publication of the dissertation. Upon completion of the research the audiotape will be offered to me, or, by agreement with me, destroyed.

I understand that excerpts from the transcript may be included in the dissertation. Copies of the dissertation will be held in the University of Chester Library and/or the Department of Social and Communication Studies Resource Room. Every effort will be made to ensure complete anonymity.

I have been made aware of the BACP's policy and procedures regarding any complaint or grievance I may have and how I might obtain further information concerning these procedures.

I believe that I have been given sufficient information about the nature of this research, including possible risks and give my full informed consent to participate.

Signed

Participant .....

Date .....

Signed Researcher .....

Date .....

## Appendix IX

Overview of themes and sub headings emerging within the outcomes.

Connection	Within Counselling With 'All That Is"
Transcendence/Mystical	Being Helped The Presence of Others Nature Triggers Work with Clients
Definition	Overall Definition Difficulties

## Appendix X

Additional extracts from participants' transcripts that I feel are relevant to my research

### Connection

*"..it's just a human being to a human being making a connection" (M. pg. 7)*

*"..to be an effective counsellor you need to be constantly aware of*

*Where you are in yourself and that is connecting me to*

*my spiritual self more than I would normally do" (M pg. 9).*

*".. feeling more connected with that client and I can feel*

*almost that feeling of higher spirituality.....there seems*

*to be some sort of connection there with me anyway....*

*...you know it's almost like a connection with that feeling of that*

*person at the same time. It's almost there is a connection there" (D. pg. 16)*

*"It's that connection ..... suddenly bursts into me that feeling, it's like going, it's sort of like a pilgrimage every time I go on that bike ride, I pass that point.... When I*

*experienced that once, it's life changing" (D. pg. 18)*

*"a client's partner died ... where he died had a connection*

*with the client and the client felt that that was him leaving a message... "(C. pg.10)*

*"I have those spiritual experiences and an interest in people.... there is an inter connection there somehow" (S. pg. 15)*

*"I'm quite prepared to believe or accept that we affect one another at a distance*

*Classic stuff like ... people get ill and other people know they're ill..*

*some kind of crossing the distance...."(S.p.20-21)*

*"I realised what Gendling is talking about in felt sense could be*

*what some of us talk about in terms of spirituality because  
he is saying in that felt sense one is interconnected beyond  
Oneself, that beyond the spiritual sense,  
I'm wondering if the felt sense is what people call the soul or  
Soul speaking to them....there's a part inside of me where I connect  
beyond and it's kind of like cutting edge on the edge of my  
awareness" (S. pg. 25)*

*"so the great thing about a mystical and spiritual experience is a sense of,  
or a sensing of, or a knowing of the inter connection...." (S. pg. 2)*

#### Definition

*"...going back to that for me was like a revelation,.. it felt like home to me and it felt  
very deep and it felt very solid and it was very ritualistic... I found it very deep and  
meaningful experience. It's a real comfort and a touchstone for me" (M. pg. 3)*

*"...its energizing fulfilling, peaceful, strong and just this huge sort of love really, it's  
Sustaining" (M. pg.4)*

*"Felt like home – solid deep, meaningful – connecting with it  
Comfort..touchstone...energizing "(M.p3)*

*"Spirituality I find it incredibly comforting, energizing, fulfilling peaceful  
strong and just this huge sense of love" (M.p.4)*

*"I was reading this article, these same feelings began to come back  
into me, which I thought was amazing really .....*

*making a connection to what he was saying was what I felt that day which had  
left such a mark,....even after 20 years it has left such a mark (D. pg. 4)*

*.. changed my life” (D.p. 5)*

*“I work to quite strict we call them precepts.... I hope that I now live by a very  
Moral code and I hope I bring that into the practice {counselling) as well “(D. pg. 9)*

*“... it’s a path that I go down, it’s not random,*

*it’s a path I go” (D. pg. 15)*

*“it feels very real...”(D. pg. 14)*

*“with me it’s development, ...I’ve been doing it for 20 years still early days*

*I strictly practice it every day it sets me up for the day, it*

*reminds me what it is all about, it reminds me going back*

*to that 20 odd years ago when all I kept thinking to myself*

*“it really doesn’t matter” and smiling about it “(D. pg. 17)*

*“When I experienced that once, it’s life changing “(D. pg. 18)*

*“I stumbled across XXXX and they’re not hung up on words...*

*There’s a meeting place of those different currents which*

*I find fun.....*

*In the silence you’re going into mystical experiences or place*

*I think having a faith does me good it makes me a better person*

*and certainly spiritual experiences make me a better person” (S. p. 22)*

*“Which I quite often do.... things are happening for me and other*

*People in the room are helping create the conditions in which that is more likely to  
happen” (S. p. 6)*

*“Sitting in theXXXX meeting and feeling the same energies*

*and then hearing people moved to speak.... I could feel the energy in my body for several days after...*

*It's always brought me comfort when I've seen people" (C. 14)*

*"I was reading this article, these same feelings began to come back*

*into me, which I thought was amazing really .....*

*making a connection to what he was saying was what I felt that day which had*

*Left such a mark,....even after 20 years it has left such a mark "(D. pg. 4)*

*"Spiritual experience... does change who I am. Spiritual experiences are like a*

*teacher... I feel like I am closer to my truer self, and in that sense*

*a return to a truer experience of myself....." (S. p.30)*

*a more fulfilling way to live" (S. p. 4)*

*"When I walk into XXXX the energy of that building hits me, when I walk into XXXX and the energy hits me ..... it's there*

*It's real" (S. p. 28-29)*

*"I hadn't realised how important it has been over the*

*years but it is "(C. p.4)*

*"It's always brought me comfort when I've seen people "(C. 14)*

### Transcendence

*"that there is another, I don't know whether it's another it feels*

*quite natural but I often get a sense of, a sort of prompting.....*

*that will come into my head... I will get a sense of 'ask about this',*

*'talk about that some more' it will be like a helper if you like.."(p. 9-10)"*

*"It's always there, it's always been there, even to phone someone.."...(M.p.11)*

*"It's natural for me to talk about those things in terms of*

*Spiritual because be being aware of the field between us*



*is part of my spiritual experience...(S.p.28)*

*"There are certain points where for me it feels more of a spiritual and its over  
the edge of who I am...."*

#### *Presence of Others*

*"to be open to as many experiences as possible and that things are  
not necessarily cut and dried, explainable in I suppose the tangible world,  
that there are other aspects of the world that can impact on us..". (C. p. 9)*

*"experience of seeing her pet dog that had died... it just seemed quite  
normal and understandable....." (C. p. 5)*

#### *Being Helped*

*"I'm walking in the country side and this phrase comes to me  
'love is the essence of being' ..... I don't know what it means,  
I don't understand it or where it comes  
from.... that's an early spiritual experience....."*

#### *Triggers*

*"It could have come at any time, but that one time  
when I knew I was on the verge of terrible things  
about to happen in my life, and it was there, it was  
there to give me that strength" (D. pg. 19)*

#### *Nature*

*"It's still there... through my meditation I can sometimes get into that feeling "(D. p. 5)*

*"It (counselling) keyed in with the same feeling of this experience" (D. p. 6)*

*"I just hope everyone could feel that experience." (D. p.20)*

*"..if I hadn't have been so open to my own sense of*

*Spirituality whether that experience for her would have  
happened because I wouldn't have given it the time and space... "(C.p.11)*

*".... they fed into each other "(S.p.13)*

## Appendix XI

The following are further findings which, due to the limitations of this research, I am unable to include in the main body of research. However, I feel these areas would benefit from further in-depth study.

### Spirituality and Work with clients

All four counsellors felt that their own spirituality weaved together with their counselling, a sort of dual process. They all felt this was very important to their lives and their work.

*"It [counselling] appealed to my sense of Christianity.....*

*my counselling came really ..... and through the sort of spiritual*

*side of wanting to help other troubled souls"(M. p. 6)*

*"I trained in Person Centred Counselling because that appealed to my*

*Spiritual self, the initial core conditions .....were all the experiences*

*I have in the relationship with my God.....*

*that's how I want to be with all people"(M.p. 7)*

*"I work to quite strict, we call them precepts, .... I now live by a very*

*moral code and I hope I bring that into the practice as well....*

*part of the spiritual thing is being very mindful of how I am*

*and there are times when I can feel myself going*

*down a road I don't like, so I might be starting to judge people*

*..... feel myself doing this and then I bring myself back in and again*

*and check in with myself "(D.p.10)*

*"by attending to my own needs then the spirituality remains alive. So*

*if I notice that I'm giving more to other people.....*

*that has an impact on my work” (C.p.2)*

*“Spirituality was there first and it matched very much*

*The Person-Centred approach as I understand it*

*anyway.. “(C.p.4)*

*“It’s enabled me to be more accepting....I have*

*accepted I suppose maybe a deeper spirituality... so yes*

*it has had an impact” (C.p.6)*

*“I do wonder whether I pursued counselling as a way*

*to discover more about myself in the first place....*

*I wonder if there was a degree of searching*

*for a forum that would offer me that*

*development opportunity” (C.p.7)*

*I do think that it [spirituality] has developed a lot more than it*

*would have done if I hadn’t had that counselling” (C.p.7)*

*“In terms of my work I believe that it (spirituality) enables me to offer much*

*greater levels of empathy .....*

*so certainly it informs my work (C.p.8)*

*Feels like a dual process (C. p.9)*

*“I was having those spiritual experiences and an*

*interest in people” (S.p.15)*

*“It was like a lot of connections were made which make sense now*

*you know looking back looking forward I was always around*

*altered states of spirituality and how to support people in exploring*

*who they are .... that pre-dates my formal practice as a*

*therapist or a counsellor but it was a back drop “(S.p.16)*

*“..... listen and see where it comes from put aside*

*your prejudices so for me that was a really good matching..... in*

*meetings .... I’m inspired to speak are the ways in which*

*I’m inspired to say things to the client....the discipline of being*

*..... helps me to take the risk around empathy..”. (S.p.18)*

*“(in counselling) when some of us use the word spiritual*

*There are other people who don’t use the word spiritual but*

*are talking about the same stuff.....” (S.p.19)*

*“My faith position has an impact on me..... having a faith*

*does me good it makes me a better person and certainly spiritual*

*experiences makes me a better person..... “(S.p.22)*

*“There are certain points where for me it feels more of a spiritual and its over  
the edge of who I am...”.*

### Experiences

*“It’s like all the other experiences of religion and spirituality*

*have been beneficial, but they sort of taught me that they are there*

*and they are ok but this is the true sort of root for me and I find it incredibly  
comforting, energizing, fulfilling, peaceful, very self sustaining”. (M. p.1)*

*“I had counselling myself..... it was just the most amazing*

*experience I’d ever had from a complete stranger... it made*

*a really big impression on me...” (M. p.5)*

*“it had a huge impact on me and it sowed the seed.... 20 years later to become a  
counsellor myself... it appealed to my sense of Christianity “(M. p. 6)*

*“my counselling came really as a result of my experience with this woman  
and through a sort of spiritual side of wanting to help other  
troubled souls really” (M. p. 6)*

*“the initial core conditions .....were all the experiences that I have  
in the relationship with my God” (M. p. 7)*

*“I had an experience once .... such an uplifting feeling.... I then did a lot more  
research into exploring spirituality” (D. p. 2)*

*“I’ve had spiritual experiences ... inter-connected with the whole of creation  
Seeing human auras, seeing energy fields around people,  
seeing colours around people” (S. p.1)*

*“Spiritual experience does change who I am (S. p.1)*

*This awesome experience ..... challenges my sense of my life (S. p.3)*

*In the silence you’re going into mystical experience “(S. p. 6)*

*“Stumbling across that ... meeting was life changing” (S. p.12)*

*“I could feel the energy in my body for several days afterwards” (S. p. 13)*